Identity and Awareness:

Manifestations of Self and Persona in Early Modern English Drama

By

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Abstract

This dissertation traces five early modern English dramatic characters through their crises of identity. The reader will follow the very different ways these characters respond to the demand that they represent themselves in the respective social worlds they inhabit. The protagonist in each of the plays, in *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, in Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*, in Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, in *Arden of Faversham*, and in Shakespeare's *Othello*, uses rhetorical skills, the impression he makes on the senses of other characters, and action to embody the function the fictional world prescribes for them. It will appear that the three corresponding media, that is, language, perception, and action, do not only give characters an opportunity to manifest aspects of their public persona; but these media also represent that dramatic world, its social conditions, and the identity of others to the characters I examine. Besides building a complex image of who they are, each character negotiates his or her relationships to others through these three media. Are characters content with the social identity they build in the process, or are they aware of who they are in some way other than what they show? Is there a part of who they are that eludes representation? When they fail to comply with the requirements of a social identity, or when they decide to withdraw from it, characters testify to a degree of consciousness that they possess, or wish they possessed, an interior space, a sense of self, as a part of their identity. The self is elusive; it resists a simple definition, but the chapters that follow point out hints and signs that the characters are aware of their precious inwardness, often in the moment when they are losing it.

The analyses take advantage of the critical literature on the early modern individual both before and after Stephen Greenblatt's groundbreaking work. Reflections on a range of contemporary written discourse support the study of the characters' success and failures in their search for identity.

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Table of Contents

Introduction

In his essay "Of the inconstancie of our actions," Michel de Montaigne questioned the assumption of the divine serenity of the immortal soul in contrast to the ephemeral existence of the body as only "the soul's conveyance" in Christian theological convention.[1] He did so by transposing the static Platonic dichotomy of body and soul into the dynamic terms of the private "selfe" and its public appearance, a "maske," lending also a dramatic aspect to his discussion of how a human being acts in the world. In his introspective mode of observation, Montaigne characterized what he called "my soule" or "my selfe"[2] as the seat of "our appetite" that pulls our actions in every which way "according as the winde of occasions doth transport us" (184). Correspondingly, the label he attaches to this inner core of the personality is "*inconstancy*" (183) and the name of its characteristic act is "*Distinguo*" (185). A dramatic sense of the core of the human personality arises in these words, the source of a will to action, which is clearly directed toward the outside world as it appears to the senses, the instruments of distinction. In discussing aspects of early modern dramatic identity in this dissertation, I am going to refer to this putative inner aspect of characters as the *self*.

I have to make a distinction here between the meaning of "self" as I use it in this dissertation and that of "inwardness." "Inwardness" is a general term for the phenomenon Katharine Eisaman Maus defines as "an unexpressed interior" in contradistinction to "a theatricalized exterior."[3] Her study on inwardness focuses on the difference between "interior and exterior" (3), on the problem of how what cannot be seen can be known, and on the social and political consequences of this "gap" (2). My work, however, explores the structure of identity and its manifestations in discourse,

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[1] According to Adolar Zumkeller, St Augustine used "Platonic images of 'the soul's clothing' […] and 'the soul's conveyance' […] to describe the body." *Augustine's Ideal of the Religious Life*, trans. Edmund Colledge (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986) 218.

[2] Michael De Montaigne, "Of the inconstancie of our actions," *The Essays or, Morall, Politike, and Militarie Discovrses*, II, 1, trans. Iohn Florio (London: 1632) 183–87. 185. *Early English Books Online* 28 July, 2014.

[3] Katharine Eisaman Maus, *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995) 2.

perception, and action. I am interested in how individual characters experience their inwardness and how they protect it by building a front to the outside world around it. In this approach, therefore, inwardness becomes personal,[4] individual, and unique. I hope that the word "self" will help me contain the unstructured and often chaotic sense of this interiority in the private domain.

Montaigne also defined the relationship between the self and its outward appearance that he called a "maske." According to him, the "selfe" emerges prior to its public image, in which it strives to realize itself to the world. While he acknowledged the passions of the heart, Montaigne pointed out that one cannot let such a sense of "confusion, disorder, blending, mingling" (185), etc., show in social situations. In an attempt to assume a semblance of the "*virtue*" (186) of "*constancie*" (183), he argued, "wee borrow" her image as a disguise (186). This way, we follow the prescript we receive "even [from] good Authors" who, Montaigne claimed, often frame in their written work "a constant and solide contexture of us" (183). Such a reliable public image, Montaigne suggests, is a mere discursive construct. To designate the front that characters often build around their putative selves to protect it and to create a socially acceptable space to satisfy its desires, I will use the term *persona*.

Montaigne believed that a polished public appearance lends itself to an "easie" formulation in "discourse" (184). Spoken words, and their written form that represents them, are indeed the most prominent, and to us the only directly accessible, medium of early modern drama. Here I draw on the insight of a philosopher who criticized St Augustine's nominal account of signification, the view that all that language does is mere reference, and called attention to the potential in language to perform action and to shape our perception: "the *speaking* of language," Wittgenstein argues, "is part of an activity, or of a form of life."[5] In his wake, linguists have made more specific statements

[4] Eisaman Maus does use the term "personal inwardness" (13).
[5] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. Gertrude Elizabeth Margaret Anscombe, German–English edition (1953; Oxford: Blackwell, 1958) 23, p. 11.

concerning the pervasive power of language to define for us, its users, what reality is. For example, Paula A. Treichler and Francine Wattman Frank claim that

> language constructs as well as reflects culture. Language thus no longer serves as the transparent vehicle of content or as the simple reflection of reality but itself participates in how that content and reality are formed, apprehended, expressed, and transformed.[6]

Language thus appears to be a universal and pervasive system of meaning making. The narrower term *discourse*, however, refers to its ongoing use in social situations. Since it is my aim in this dissertation to find out how main characters in English drama form a notion of who they are in their relations to other characters, I will have to observe not only the abstract properties of the language they use but the ways it shapes situations and precipitates specific outcomes in the plot. Therefore, Deborah Schiffrin's definition of discourse as not merely a component in constructing the social world but being a part of that "social world under construction"[7] will be a useful reminder that discourse plays a decisive role in shaping the action and the characters' idea of where they stand in the drift of that action.

Apart from living in words, characters also make their presence felt to others and to themselves through the senses, most of all through vision. Sheer sensory data not being available, the reader will, again, have to observe the ways characters respond to what they can see, hear, touch, smell, or taste, and sometimes even feel in the interior of their bodies. Instead of only mapping the senses of the body, my purpose in paying attention to the diverse stimuli that affect characters is always to find out how sensations and their meaning, as it is reflected and contextualized in their awareness, help them define who they are in the social world of the play. To

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[6] Paula A. Treichler and Francine Wattman Frank, "Introduction: Scholarship, feminism, and language change," *Language, Gender, and Professional Writing: Theoretical Approaches and Guidelines for Nonsexist Usage*, eds. Frank and Treichler (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1989) 1–34. 3.
[7] Deborah Schiffrin, *Discourse Markers* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 2.

give such an integrated account of perception, it is inevitable to consider how expectations influence it. The cognitive approach to perception called "*New Look*" supports this endeavor by encouraging the reader to conceptualize perception in terms of a "top-down processing." According to this view, which became popular in the second half of the twentieth century, the subject arrives at the meaning of sensory data by embedding them in "higher-level information," such as his or her "prior knowledge […] or the meaningful context in which a stimulus is seen."[8] Only to the extent a character consciously reflects on his or her being in the dramatic world can we speak of a sense of *identity*. Therefore, the term "identity" in this dissertation refers to the more or less conscious reflection of a character on his or her changing position with respect to others in the fictional world. The notion of *identity* includes clues not merely to the sensual, perceptible, and discursive shape of a character's public image, the *persona*, but to the invisible *self* as well, even though its essence can be hardly grasped in words. In bringing the aspects of language and perception together in a focus on the dynamic relationship between self and persona in a specific identity, I hope, consists a main part of the original contribution of this dissertation to previous early modern identity studies.

Characters' awareness of their identity in a social context and of the importance to shape their image, their persona, in the eyes of others makes it inevitable that we conceptualize perception in reflexive terms. However strong the sense of its presence was in early modern consciousness, as it certainly was in Montaigne,[9] the self is not palpable to the senses, and the French philosopher was aware of its elusiveness in self-observation. The perceptive thinker can see a "supple variation, and easie yielding contradiction" in him- or herself, he wrote, and added that this "volubility and discordance" resulted, at least in part, from the inevitable subjectivity of the

[8] E. Bruce Goldstein, *Sensation and Perception* (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole; London: International Thomson, 1996) 24f.

[9] Montaigne declares that "*Every man beareth the whole stampe of humane condition*," and so he presents himself as a valid example of this generality when he writes, "Authors communicate themselves unto the world by some speciall and strange marke; I the first, by my generall disposition; as *Michael de Montaigne*; not as a Grammarian, or a Poet, or a Lawyer." Montaigne, "Of Repenting," III, 2, 451–58. 451. Montaigne "claims that his own self is the main subject matter of his philosophy." Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and its Sources*, ed. Michael Mooney (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979) 30.

observer's eye: "If I speake diversly of my selfe," he admits, "it is because I looke diversly upon my selfe" (185). Since characters cannot observe their inner being directly, they rely on the manifestations of their identity in the eyes of others. As a result, they either hide their inner selves or try to make them explicit—and at that moment they are already shaping their persona, not only their selves. As soon as the self comes to light, it is not private anymore, its previously felt inwardness is lost, which renders the notion of self truly elusive. When they rise above the chaos of the self by joining the ongoing social discourse, relying exclusively on what is visible, and embracing its "assured policies,"[10] characters often leave us with a sense that something has been "destroyed"[11] in the process.

However important language and perception appear to be to an understanding of dramatic forms of identity, the picture would be incomplete without considering the third medium, namely *action*, in which dramatic identity inevitably expresses itself. According to Aristotle, in the fictional world of drama "the Plot is the imitation of the action," and it is "the first principle" and "the soul of a tragedy."[12] Furthermore, beside language and perception, action is the third component of what Robin Allott sums up in the weighty phrase "total human behavior."[13] The analyses of drama that will follow, therefore, examine identity in its manifestations in three media: in *language*, in *perception*, and in *action*. I consider identity a composite of a sense of interiority and of a front which the presumptive self builds around itself. As far as I can show how the relative weight and delicate equilibrium of these two components, *self* and *persona*, determine identity, my approach to

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[10] Montaigne, "Of the inconstancie" 184.

[11] Lynda E. Boose points out that the dissolution of the obscure mythical significance of the handkerchief in "Iago's pornographic literalism" makes us "understand what is ultimately destroyed." "Othello's Handkerchief: 'The Recognizance and Pledge of Love'," *English Literary Renaissance* 5.3 (Autumn 1975): 360–74. 367.

[12] Aristotle, *Poetics*, transl. S. H. Butcher, *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Arts* by S. H. Butcher, 4th ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 1951) VI. 6, 14, pp. 25–29.

[13] In his study of language in the context of human behavior, Allott claims that "words, the fabric of language, are not arbitrary […] but derive directly from […], and are integrated with, perception and action, the other main components of total human behavior." Robin Allott, *The Natural Origin of Language. The Structural Inter-relation of Language, Visual Perception and Action* (Knebworth, Hertfordshire: Able Publishing, 2001) i.

identity is dynamic. The balance between the two, the dominance of one or the other in the sense of identity, might change in the course of the plot even in one character, as we will see most prominently in Othello. Based on the foregoing, the topic of this dissertation is the manifestations of identity in early modern English drama. Apart from the question of how identity is structured, it remains to be determined which of the three media, *language*, *perception*, or *action*, dominates identity in the drama I examine.

In his seminal work which, as A. J. Piesse formulates, "sidelined" earlier approaches to the problem of identity and began "a continual redefinition of what constitutes the individual,"[14] Stephen Greenblatt delineates the result of "self-fashioning" as the "achievement" of a "shape: a distinctive personality, a characteristic *address to the world*, a consistent mode of *perceiving* and *behaving*."[15] With this, he names all three of Allott's main components of "total human behavior," as I quoted them above, that is, "language, perception, and action."[16] In my choice of plays to analyze, I primarily paid attention to the balance among these three factors, but mostly to the prominence of language and perception. Othello's persistent demand for "ocular proof" and Iago's dexterity in weaving the plot in words have intrigued me ever since my undergraduate encounter with the play, and it made me question to what extent Othello is conscious of his own motives and their origin. The experience of this tragedy then prompted me to look for other, earlier plays that problematize the connection between perception and the use of language and might prepare this culmination in *Othello* of the intensity in the way language shapes the protagonist's sense of who he is and determines his course of action. There is a nightmarish, dreamlike quality to Othello's perception of his narrowing world, and this goes along with a limited sense of his freedom in action.

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[14] A. J. Piesse, "Identity," *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*, ed. Michael Hattaway, Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture Ser. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000) 634–43. 634.
[15] Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1980) 2. (Emphasis added.)
[16] Allott i.

In the course of my readings I was struck again and again by the power of language to skew perception and to restrict main characters' freedom of choices in action in other early modern plays as well and its force to control them rather than to empower them. Nonetheless, I found significant differences in the degree of this control. The increasing importance of textuality in humanism and in post-Reformation England seems more and more to affect the dramatic view of the autonomy of perception and action: characters seem to be more and more dominated by discourse as we approach the end of the Elizabethan era. Are they aware of what drives them in their action, I asked myself in the analyses. Do they know who they are? Can they rely on their sense perception when assessing their position in their dramatic social worlds, or does the ongoing discourse they participate in shape this perception in ways unbeknownst to them? For the purpose of exploring what Greenblatt calls the "experience" in characters "of being molded by forces outside one's control" and "the attempt to fashion other selves" (3), *Othello* seemed to provide the most fertile ground and an end point at the same time to which I could compare earlier plays.

In addition to "an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process"[17] Greenblatt observes in fictional and historical personages in the sixteenth century, earlier Tudor drama seems more optimistic in terms of the characters' operational distance to non-discursive, sensual experience and in terms of the freedom of "self-fashioning" language affords them. The comic ending of *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, my first play, is liberating even in contrast to the denouement of my next example, Shakespeare's early comedy, *The Comedy of Errors*. Hodge suffers from a bout of perceptual delusions on his way to presenting himself as an eligible youth, and he finds support in his endeavor in the use of sophisticated rhetorical devices. In contrast, Antipholus of Syracuse struggles to define who he is with respect to his family and the larger community of Ephesus, in which his brother grew up. The fact that he is condemned to act under a false name calls attention to the limiting function of language. While it is

[17] Greenblatt 2.

a liberating force for Hodge, language restricts Antipholus' perception and action. The sharp contrast in the role language plays in these two comedies urged me to analyze them next to each other.

From the moment he appears onstage, Doctor Faustus is preoccupied with the question of who he is. He conducts an experiment in which he strives to answer it in an alienating theological framework. How does this framework limit his attempted self-determination, and to what extent is he aware of its effect on his undertaking, I tried to find out. I selected this tragedy for analysis because it presents a hero with exceptional poetic skills and an urge to express himself in opposition to a language that is more suitable for the shaping of a corporate identity as foreseen in theological statements outlining the plan of salvation. An inevitable condition for coming to terms with the uniform identity the salvation plan imposes on him would be, it seems, that Faustus accept the impersonal power contemporary Protestantism attributed to God. The theological context in which Faustus is entangled hardly allows for an experience of inwardness.

The severe limitation on Arden's perception in *Arden of Faversham*, a wilful blindness that persists in him throughout the plot until his death, requires an explanation. Moreover, the play exerts considerable power on the student because it dramatizes a historical event, a murder that took place during Edward VI's reign. Since the victim of this murder was a beneficiary of Henry VIII's massive church and land reform, the economic and religious policies of Henry VIII reverberate in every emotion that stirs in the play. My chapter on this play is an exception in this study, because it presents the full-blown sense of identity the historic figure Henry VIII built for himself. I use it as an example and measure the balance between self and persona in main characters of the play against it. In this sense, the play deals with the effort in some, like in Black Will, to emulate Henry's powerful combination of self and persona and with the refusal in others, for example, in Arden, to yield to its force.

From this follows one of the four overall arguments of this dissertation: dramatic heroes reach fulfilment only if they maintain their desire through periodic delays and abnegation, and if they manage to build a strong persona, as a front, by weaving textual and oral discourse, visual display, and occasional aggressive action around their selves to protect and hide it, instead of trying to explicate it, communicate it, or give it away. The second argument ranks the relative weight of the media in which identity expresses itself: oral and textual discourse dominates dramatic identity in the Renaissance English plays I examine; discourse also restricts and shapes perception and determines its meaning for characters; and, finally, action, "the soul of a tragedy" for Aristotle, is generally the least powerful or decisive factor in the shaping of identity.

The third argument concerns the development of the shape of dramatic identity over the period of the fifty years through which the range of plays in this dissertation is spread: it seems to move from a balanced whole of self and persona into an increasing sense of fragmentation. One single character is less capable of uniting these two vital aspects in a full-fledged sense of identity as we progress in time. As a result, pairs of seemingly inseparable characters emerge who complement each other and each of whom represents only one of the two components: the self *or* the persona. The fourth and final argument names the contents of the self in general terms: the "invisible personal interior"[18] of characters consists of heterogeneous elements, many of which we might call "residual"[19] in post-Reformation England, but all of which appear alien and reactionary in contrast to the primarily transparent, discursive appearance of the "dominant" (121-27) kind of persona. Catholic idolatry, witchcraft, sorcery, Egyptian magic, emotional and sexual attachment, female sexual attractiveness, maternal dependence, and uncontrollable passions appear as the unspeakable substance of the unstructured self, lumped together often indiscriminately, based on an undefined affinity between these matters. In its own way, each of the individual chapters

[18] Eisaman Maus 12.
[19] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, Marxist Introductions Ser. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) 121–27.

supports the above arguments which, in combination, strengthen the focus on the manifestations of identity. This focus gives the reader an insight into the characters' personal experience of who they are; it layers this experience, contextualizes, and historicizes it. To my knowledge, a similarly complex case study of the sense of identity in individual characters has not appeared before.

Gammer Gurton's Needle is the first play in chronology. It presents the way Hodge, a domestic servant and the protagonist of the comedy, builds his identity starting from an implicit desire and anxiety, through becoming aware of them, and finally in mounting a public persona to elude the control of his mistress, Gammer Gurton, and to impress his beloved, Kirstian Clack. He fortifies this persona with a masculine visual appearance and sophisticated rhetorical skills. Until he succeeds in this with the help of a father figure, Diccon, he outwardly complies with the requirements of the identity Gammer imposes on him as a subordinate in the household. This is the only play in the series that creates a strong sense of the presence of bodies, and it foregrounds farcical physical action as a foil to the final triumph of a superior discourse that creates the space for the socially legitimate fulfilment of Hodge's desire in the prospect of marriage. When he builds his identity by following the desire of his self and creating favorable conditions for them in a powerful persona, Hodge follows a pattern in miniature similar to the one the historic Henry VIII shaped on an extravagant scale—I will outline his exemplary achievement in this respect in Chapter Four. Hodge reaches a full-blown sense of identity which none of my later dramatic characters would be able to reproduce. While Hodge overcomes the force of Catholic idolatry and witchcraft in Gammer Gurton, a sense of which partially he and Diccon construct, he persists in his desire for Kirstian Clack without a compromise.

In contrast to the remarkable integrity we see in Hodge, Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* takes a step toward a disintegration of the sense of identity. Antipholus of Syracuse's notion of who he is is damaged, in the first place, by an originary loss of his name. Instead of maintaining his

desire to find his brother, he denies himself the opportunity for a discovery when it offers itself upon his arrival in Ephesus. While he retreats to an implicit self with a stifled wish to be reunited with his family, his twin brother acts out all the functions of a public persona. Moreover, an unfounded fear of witchcraft and sorcery makes Antipholus of Syracuse unable to establish a meaningful relationship to either of the female characters who temporarily attract him: Adriana and Luciana. This aversion to the matter of the self and his urge to escape it render him incapable of representing his own desire in the given social situation and vulnerable to being incorporated in what Montaigne called the "assured policies" and "certaine Lawes,"[20] that is, in the discursively controlled commercial mechanism of the Ephesian society. As a result, the traveling brother loses his freedom of action, and the discursive order he would like to join severely restricts his perception. Finally, he will be reunited with his family at the price of losing his say in determining who he is.

The written language of the Scripture is so powerfully present from the beginning in Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* that it is hardly possible for the protagonist to establish a foothold from where he could resist the way it defines his corporate identity. The context of contemporary Protestant theology does not afford Faustus an opportunity to fulfill his longing for a sense of interiority, to possess his own soul. Therefore, his self remains present largely in his vain search for it, in its painful absence. What is more, Faustus' attempted escape to magic and sorcery is a false promise. In his deed, he gives away what no "Lines, circles, seals, letters and characters" can restore to him: his personal participation in the salvation of his soul. Therefore, Faustus' subjectivity remains illusory, and the notion of the eternity of his soul oppresses him as a tragic burden. His words quote and misquote the New Testament, Homer, Lucretius, and "necromantic books;" his perception exhibits a trite literalism; and his action shows no sign of an authentic

[20] Montaigne, "Of the inconstancie" 184.

purpose. Faustus cannot attain a genuine sense of identity or show empathy with Mephastophilis, who, similarly to him, is locked up in a displaced subject position.

Nonetheless, not all of the main characters in these plays strive to achieve a full sense of identity in which self and persona complement and mutually support each other. However favorable it is for him economically and politically, Thomas Arden is reluctant to acknowledge the textual definition of who he is in the dramatic world of the anonymous *Arden of Faversham*. He withdraws into the isolation of a constructed sense of essentialism, the nobility of his "blood," and thus he forgoes the discursive support the royal deed would lend to his station. As a result, without a strong public persona to hold onto, he cannot enjoy the benefits of, or even uphold his claim to, the enormous wealth he has received in the wake of the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII's reign. Eventually, he succumbs to the ravenous local network of the discontented, the reactionary forces of idolatry, magical causations, and a pagan worship of fertility. Even Black Will rises above him in terms of a sustained passion for wealth and power: the ruffian relies on a chivalric fictional tradition to create a narrative space for his desire and to act it out. However, his insistence on an imaginary self makes Arden blind to his wife's obvious murderous intent; it exposes him to the power of her verbal assault, and paralyzes him in his need of active self-defense.

The power of narrative achieves its apotheosis in Shakespeare's *Othello*. However, Shakespeare makes sure to embed the division of labor between Iago and Othello, the representatives of the power of sheer discourse and of the vulnerability of a self in need of discursive protection and vindication respectively, in a dynamic plot. Before the Moor gives up his self entirely to the narrative Iago offers him to construct a new sense of his identity, he makes a desperate attempt to regain it. However, once he has yielded up his inner being in exchange for the hope of social advancement and thus betrayed its "vessel," Desdemona, Othello cannot help but act out to its conclusion the fiction he authored in a concerted effort with his ancient. Beside prescribing what he has to do, the lie Othello accepts about his wife takes control of his perception:

for him, the handkerchief loses its magical power woven into its fabric to bind the inner selves of husband and wife together and turns into a mere object for the eye to register its presence or absence. Thus, a positive, absolute value changes into a surface phenomenon of visibility, and the "deep play" of personal attachment is lost. The tragedy was first performed by Shakespeare's newly renamed company, the King's Men,[21] and it conveys a sense that, by the end of the period of Elizabethan drama the fragmentation of identity is irreversible.

While historians and critics have never questioned the growing significance of the public, social, and political aspect of the individual in Renaissance Humanism, the scholarly opinion of the past half century fluctuated concerning the reality of an inward self and ran into contradictions. Studies in the 1960s and 70s emphasized the sense of freedom and the subjectivity the newly emerging individual, the citizen, enjoyed in public life from the end of the Middle Ages, but at the same time they acknowledged the equalizing power of the written word in Humanism and of the Roman law in public life in regulating and controlling the functions individuals could play in Renaissance society. From the 1980s on, new-historicist and cultural materialist approaches to early modern English drama, as Eisaman Maus argues, questioned the notion that inwardness had an independent existence prior to its social context.[22] In her *Inwardness and the Theater in the English Renaissance*, nonetheless, Eisaman Maus herself reaffirms the distinction between what she calls "external show" and the "inner man" (28).

In *The Shape of Medieval History*, William J. Brandt contrasts the clerical and the aristocratic view of human nature in reading chronicles from the period between 1100 and 1400. The clerical perception posited an imperiled internal core in human beings within an inconstant and fallible human body, while the aristocratic chroniclers focused on codified outward gestures that

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[21] Kim F. Hall, "Introduction," *Othello*, by William Shakespeare, ed. Kim F. Hall (Boston, New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007) 1–42. 2.
[22] Eisaman Maus 26, 28.

constituted moral behavior with no regard for interiority. Neither of them, however, attributed any significance to individual character, motive, or identity. The English clerical chronicle, Brandt argues, enumerated "characterizing adjectives" of a personage without connecting them either to each other or to their bearer[23] as a "total" individual (157) or an agent of human action (150). Except for Geoffrey Chaucer, Brandt cannot discover "a sense of human identity" in medieval literature, because, he asserts, "there is no suggestion of complex human purposes underlying either the character or the action" (156).[24] Instead of shaping his or her identity, for the clerical chronicler, human experience corrupted from the outside the impersonal core, the soul of a being, the "good" that had been "given in the sacrament of baptism prior to the self and to all experience in the world" (166). Passions and desire did not originate in the soul or self, as Montaigne accounted for them during the Renaissance,[25] but they affected it through "one's dealings with the world."[26] The appearance of the dramatic sense of inwardness in early modern drama, therefore, required a turn from the outside world toward the inner man in the search of an independent origin and driving force of human action.

However, the dramatic view of identity and inwardness I am concerned with in this dissertation seems to have been influenced also by a formalized aristocratic approach to outward behavior, and it might have evolved as a reaction against the perceived emptiness of this rigid code of conduct. Feudal chivalry, Brandt explains, "dictated" a respect not to the other person but "to a situation whose proper behavior was prescribed." This ethical code of honor was, as a result, "very impersonal" (109). Brandt sums up "the aristocratic conception of good" in the word "stance." This

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[23] William J. Brandt, *The Shape of Medieval History: Studies in Modes of Perception* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1966) 153f.

[24] In contrast to this, Professor Richard Hardin calls attention to a complex sense of identity in Sir Gawain, who does respect the other person in his *courtesie* toward the temptress in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Personal communication.

[25] "Passions, and Affections, or perturbations of the mind," Thomas Wright argued in concert with Montaigne in 1604, are actions that "proceed from men's souls." They "alter the humours of our bodies, causing some passion or alteration in them." *The Passions of the Mind in General* (London: Printed by Valentine Simmes for Walter Burre, 1604) 7f. *Early English Books Online* 15 July 2014.

[26] Brandt 166.

notion is inherently theatrical as Brandt defines it: the "aristocrat found his summum bonum in a kind of public posture taken with regard to his own class; he was an actor inventing a script which he hoped would turn out to be heroic" (114). Chivalry was, Brandt confirms, "more than a code of behavior; it was also a kind of perceptual organization giving shape and meaning to the world in which the knight lived" (140).

In contrast to Brandt, who describes the way the medieval chronicler interpreted "somebody else's drama" (xvii), Walter Ullmann takes a more direct view of the forces that helped the concept of "the individual as a mere subject"[27] evolve, as he argues, into that of the citizen as a "full, autonomous, and constituent member" (3) of society. As an effect of his or her baptism, the medieval Christian adherent was "a member of the all-embracing, comprehensive corporation, the Church" (7), Ullmann claims. Following this act of elevation (8), the believer rose above his or her carnality, in the language of St. Paul, the "animalic man," the "man of nature" (7), and "emerged as a *nova creatura*: he was *renatus*, he was reborn" (8). Since he or she was now "on a level quite different from that of a mere man," the Christian no longer was expected to rely on his or her "natural, human insight" or "autonomous, indigenous functions" in the "management of public affairs" (9). This subjection of the individual "to higher authority" (10), resulting from his faith, his "*fidelitas*" (9), Ullmann points out, was codified in the letters of St. Paul (10) and, following this, in medieval canon law (13).

Ullmann defines the Renaissance in terms of a reversal of the Christian rebirth in baptism, which allowed natural human beings to take an active part in shaping their social environment. At the same time, he admits that the written law structured this seeming autonomy of the individual. Contrary to the "abstract thesis" (2–50) of spiritual man in a "descending theme of government" (30f), he argues, individual rights (55) and autonomy (58) began to assert themselves from below,

[27] Walter Ullmann, *The Individual and Society in the Middle Ages* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966) 5.

based on a network of horizontal relations, self-government (56–59), and on "common consent" (59). Lay individuals began to participate in public affairs, creating a "subterranean, invisible platform" to precipitate "the process of emancipating the individual" from being a "mere subject" to "doctrine" (62). However, the evidence Ullmann himself presents proves that not only the Pauline notion of baptism, but also the alleged independence and autonomy (3) of the "liberated," "emancipated" (6), and "full-fledged" (54) citizen derived its power from the written word, for example the thirty-ninth article of Magna Carta (71) and the vernacular *Mirror of the Saxons* (108). The "legal security of at least the freeman" and "the elimination of arbitrariness in government" (76) was founded in the "equalizing effects" (85) of texts, of the written law, and did not inhere in some particular attribute or property of being a baron, let alone in individual barons themselves. This fact questions notions of the origin of individuality independent of texts that organized and codified social behavior.

While he quotes the sources of such abstract thinking in St Paul and medieval canon law, Ullmann does not reflect on the question in what form "natural reality" survived for the law-givers to perceive and encode it in texts. However, he points to "thirteenth-century […] naturalism" (104) in the visual arts (105) and to a growing attention to "human feelings, passions, and motives" in writing (107) as examples of "purely secular values" that emerged in opposition to Christian spiritual virtue (109). These changes in approach, Ullmann claims, led to "the rebirth of the individual as a natural man" that had been "wiped out by his baptism" and "had been overshadowed" "for virtually a millenium" (116).

The distinction within the natural order "between the individual as man and the individual as citizen," as Aristotle formulated and Thomas Aquinas confirmed it (126), attains primary importance for the study of identity in early modern drama. The individual character acts in the field of state ideology and politics, and he or she has to cope with the residual content of his or her own consciousness in this discursive context. While Ullmann argues that the new citizen becomes

"the judge and master of his own social and political life," he himself points out that "the descending thesis of government and law, prevalent and virtually undisputed as it was in the high Middle Ages […], transmitted to later generations one very precious legacy, and that is the idea of the supremacy of law, the idea of the rule of law" (146). Besides being a reaction to the rigid aristocratic code of medieval chivalric conduct, the sense of individual autonomy, the notion of the inward self, as an aspect of the identity distinct from the text of the law, might as well have emerged in response to the pressure of law and state control.

While Ullmann uses the term "individualism" to refer to the status of the citizen who was already incorporated in the legislative procedure of the state, Colin Morris gives the word a more emphatic sense of inwardness. For him, individualism in the West "is far from expressing the common experience of humanity."[28] Instead of a political meaning, he gives it "a more directly personal" (3) significance. Individualism was a challenge to the "uniformity dictated by authority" (5). In terms of "the development of self-awareness and self-expression [and] the freedom of a man to declare himself without paying excessive attention to demands of convention or the dictates of authority," Morris argues, "the twelfth century was […] a peculiarly creative age" (7). Importantly, Morris distinguishes individualism from humanism (3). The latter presupposes an ease in the reading and elegance and coherence in the writing of Latin and in the sensitive use of literary genres (8). The avenue to the discovery of the individual, he argues, led through a "mastery of Latin composition" which endowed writers with "a naturalness and immediacy of observation, and a subtlety of reflection" (9). Thus, humanism appears here as a third force that contributed to the emergence of the sense of self in individuals.

According to Morris, the interest in the individual originated under the pressure of Christianity and the classical tradition (10). Similar to the reactions to traditional institutions of the Ancient World in ancient mysticism and world-renunciation (14), a tendency occurred in eleventh

[28] Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual 1050–1200* (London: SPCK, 1972) 2.

century "monastic reformers" (36) against aristocratic constraints on individual endeavor (33) "to know oneself in one's own true being" (31) and, as Peter Damiani formulated, to discover "the splendour of the inner country" (31f). Proof for a genuine interest in the self or in "the inner man," the "inner mystery," as eleventh-century Benedictine scholars called it, is the importance they assigned to "intention" in the judgment of behavior (73–75).

"God's saving act in Christ," Morris points out, "has always had a corporate and an individual aspect" (139) to it, but the day of the Last Judgment was usually understood, following Saint Augustine, as the final point in human history more than a change for an individual believer (139, 144). Nonetheless, in the period between 1050 and 1200, a movement Morris calls "spiritualism" challenged this "traditional eschatology:" an "original vitality flowed into the relationship between God and the individual" (145). Orthodox writers of the eleventh and twelfth centuries began to focus "less on the destiny of the church than on the destiny of each believer."[29] It appears that almost four and a half centuries before the appearance of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, theologians began to pay attention to the "answer which the individual must make" to the "objective reality" of the Last Judgment.[30] In this new approach, Morris adds, the focus is on "one's personal answer and personal hope of heaven" (147), "on the encounter of God with the human soul" (148) that Faustus, we must add, longs desperately to experience.

In his 1977 book on the evolution of identity titled *Medieval Foundations of Renaissance Humanism*, Ullmann discusses the emergence of the movement *Devotio moderna*,[31] "an individually oriented appeal to the religious sentiments" in opposition to "the external ecclesiastical structure and organization and its adjuncts of power of enforcement through a hierarchically ordered machinery and above all the mechanics of law" (189). The "totality point of view" of the Church that

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[29] Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum* (Paris, 1949) 322, qtd. in Morris 146.
[30] Morris 146.
[31] Walter Ullmann, *Medieval Foundations of Renaissance Humanism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977) 190.

ensured the seeming unity "of government, of life and the purpose of life" was, Ullmann claims, still asserted "with exactly the same meaning" a thousand years later, at the turn of the fifteenth century (18). Ullmann here emphasizes the role language played in shaping and expressing self-awareness in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (3–5). He underlines that the humanist renaissance made its first impact in the political and governmental sphere of life (9). Renaissance humanism, Ullmann makes it clear, "found its first and perhaps most important manifestation in a political context" (102). According to St Thomas, "political science was the most fundamental (*principalissima*) of all human sciences" (122). The institutions (112) and the Latin of ancient Roman law continued to determine the political science and practice of humanism (111). If the truth of the self appears "unspeakable"[32] in early modern drama, as Eisaman Maus argues, and if "the individual has an authentic interest in protecting" (20) it, historical developments suggest that he or she has a good reason to defend it against the pervasive influence of political discourse.

Nonetheless, education and the spread of reading and writing attempted to appropriate this private realm of the individual. With Renaissance humanism becoming an end in itself from the early fifteenth century, Ullman continues,[33] a "heightened literary sense" began to emerge (171), and this resulted in a concentration on language in "the *studia humanitatis*" (173), which, in turn, allowed "the *literati* of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries" to "depict the very essence of the personality." This elaboration on the self took place, again, "under the spell of the ancients" (177), which makes what Ullmann calls "a realistic portraiture of man's natural personality" (179), that is, the "substance of humanity itself" (180), appear for present-day readers a rather textual construct.

[32] Eisaman Maus 1.
[33] Ullmann, *Medieval Foundations* 169f.

The work of Brandt, Ullmann, and Morris I reviewed above, together with that of Robert W. Hanning,[34] became, as A. J. Piesse formulates, "sidelined by a continual redefinition of what constitutes the individual" with Stephen Greenblatt, Jonathan Dollimore, and Catherine Belsey supplanting those earlier approaches[35] based on essentialist[36] and liberal humanist[37] assumptions. Piesse sums up the common assumption underlying Greenblatt's and Belsey's arguments saying that "any formulation of individuality" has to be examined "in the light of cultural context" and "any exposition of self" has to be considered as only one of "a series of options" instead of being "intrinsically different" from something else that has preceded it.[38] In opposition to Ullmann's argument in both of his books I discussed above, Greenblatt denies the centrality of the issue of "autonomy" in the evaluation of what constituted identity in Renaissance England and argues that what he terms "self-fashioning," that is, "the power to impose a shape upon oneself" is "an aspect of the more general power to control identity."[39] This power to generate identities, he argues, originated "in the intellectual, social, psychological, and aesthetic structures" of the early modern period (1). The new-historicist statement, it seems, does away with the assumption that the self has an autonomous origin and a foundation independent of the political and discursive spheres. While the plays I have selected for analysis in this dissertation all testify to Greenblatt's claim that "in the sixteenth century there appears to be an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process" (2), the examination of characters' sense of identity suggests that they often struggle painfully to escape from this immanent force of control.

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[34] Robert W. Hanning, *The Individual in Twelfth-century Romance* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977).
[35] A. J. Piesse, "Identity," *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*, ed. Michael Hattaway, Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture Ser. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000) 634–43. 634f.
[36] This is Jonathan Dollimore's term in "Introduction to the Second Edition," *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (1984; Durham: Duke University Press, 2004) xli–xcix. lviii.
[37] This is what Catherine Belsey calls those assumptions in *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (London and New York: Methuen, 1985) 8.
[38] Piesse 635.
[39] Greenblatt 1.

The range of the context in which I situate the formation of identity is narrower than the one Greenblatt uses. He takes into account "the cultural system of meanings that creates specific individuals" (3): dramatic characters, contemporary authors, and political figures alike. In contrast, except for a brief discussion of Henry VIII's sense of identity in Chapter Four, I limit my scope to characters in their respective dramatic worlds and attempt to embed those worlds, the dramatic texts, within other kinds of discourse, highlighting aspects of the "systems of public signification" (5) that seem likely to have influenced the relative and changing dominance of action, perception, and language in the plays themselves. My interest lies in "how literary […] identities were formed in this culture," not "social" (6) ones.

Greenblatt points out that all the figures he concentrates on exhibit a "profound […] social and economic" "mobility" (7) by which he clearly means a readiness for upward movement. This is true of most, but not all, of the main characters in the plays I analyze. Doctor Faustus and Thomas Arden, for example, enter the action of their respective plays already at a high social status: Faustus with well-developed ambitions and Arden with a large portion of pretense. Although Othello's case is the most complicated of all the characters, similarly to Hodge and Antipholus of Syracuse, he corroborates Greenblatt's "governing condition[…]" that "Self-fashioning is achieved in relation to something perceived as alien, strange, or hostile" (9).

In his analysis of Renaissance tragedy, Jonathan Dollimore attacks, more radically than Greenblatt, the notion of the "autonomy" of the individual and of the humanist ideal of the essential nature of the subject. He subscribes to Greenblatt's view of the role of "intellectual, social, psychological, and aesthetic structures" in the shaping of identity, claiming that materialist criticism, in general, "relates both the literary canon and changing interpretations of it to the cultural formations which produce(d) them"[40] and, more particularly, in reference to J. W. Lever,[41]

[40] Dollimore xlv.
[41] J. W. Lever, *The Tragedy of State* (London: Methuen, 1971).

that "suffering and conflict" in the tragedies he discusses are "the effect of social and historical forces focussed in state power."[42] The emphasis on the oppressive nature of the establishment explains, in part, his difference from Greenblatt's position: following a somewhat simplifying division, American new historicists believe, he says, that Renaissance drama "reinforce[d] the dominant order," while cultural materialists of the United Kingdom, like Dollimore himself, tend to think that it "interrogate[d] it to the point of subversion" (l). However, in line with his opposition to humanism, Dollimore denies the essence of the subject and its separate existence from public life. Materialist theory rejects, in particular, he points out, "the humanist belief in a unified, autonomous self" (lvii).

In my own analysis of four Tudor plays and an early Stuart one, I rely more on what main characters seem to believe about the nature of their own selves in the context of a more or less dominant dramatic discourse than on critical schools or ideological convictions. The chronological sequence of these plays testifies to an increasing sensitivity to the loss of self. What Dollimore refuses to believe in makes itself felt for these characters more and more in its absence. While Renaissance drama subverts "the idea of a divinely ordered universe" and what Dollimore calls "its corollary: the unified human subject" (lx), main characters seem to be anxious to maintain a part of their identity that cannot be summed up in their public persona. Apparently influenced by the dramatic sense of a loss of self, "a form of modern criticism," Dollimore writes, is "inexhaustibly preoccupied with the supposed non-existence of the essential unified self" (lxii). One aim of this dissertation is to do justice to this preoccupation by turning directly to the characters of early modern drama.

Continuing the new effort to redefine, in Piesse's words, "what constitutes the individual," Catherine Belsey asserts the power of "the meanings in circulation" and of the "signifying practice"

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[42] Dollimore xlviii.

of a period to determine "what it is to be a person."[43] Ullmann's idea of the autonomy of the individual and of the control of the citizen as lawgiver over public discourse has now been replaced by the assumption that, instead, it is the subject who is "held in place in a specific discourse, a specific knowledge, by the meanings available there." Now it appears that the "signifying practice always precedes the individual" and the subject is merely "an effect of the meanings it seems to possess." (5). Belsey takes a step further than Greenblatt or Dollimore did before her: while the latter two conceived of the subject as dependent on the "intellectual, social, psychological, and aesthetic structures" and on the realm of the "political, historical and social" respectively, for Belsey, subjectivity appears to be "discursively produced" (5), and subject positions are created in a "contest for meaning" within the field of the signifying practice (6). With this, Belsey does not merely repudiate the liberal humanist notion of the essential freedom of "*man*" and of the birth of the "unconstrained expression of human nature" in the seventeenth-century English revolutions (8) and earlier, but she also relegates "the social and political" to a rank below that of language (54). As a consequence, Renaissance drama emerges in her view as a ground where "rival discourses" intersect (10).

When they do converge, parallel discourses define the subject in incongruent ways, which reveals its constructed and fragmented nature. The subject's imaginary interiority is thus a mirage (54); in the theater, it is a product of the contradictory functions of the character's speech (48–52). But what causes this lack of integrity in a character? What makes him or her powerless to distance and protect him- or herself from the power of discourse? What causes his or her helplessness against being incorporated in it? The general and simple answer that the participation in organized social activity has survival value for the individual cannot satisfy the student of literature. So, I will seek specific answers in the plays and start a new quest in every chapter. Every "specific text," Belsey argues, "proffers a specific subject-position from which it is most readily intelligible" (6).

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[43] Belsey 5.

However, there is always "*a* truth, a meaning," she concedes, which language cannot quite absorb or sum up succinctly. This truth is "unconscious," "always familial," always hidden "in the past" (53), she says, and, I might add, it is not discursive.

Beside her valuable insight into the sociohistorical context of *Arden of Faversham*, of which I take advantage in my fourth chapter, I found Belsey's analogy of the textually determined subject position in the realm of vision useful. A reference to Brunelleschi's invention of "monocular perspective" (24) helps us understand the power of Iago's imagery to control Othello's perception of "an internally coherent and unified spectacle" (25) from an arbitrarily chosen but then privileged point of view. The same concept might affect the way we conceptualize Faustus attaining an imaginary mastery of the world in a spectacle of "absolute (and illusory) transcendence" (26) to emulate God's perspective. Faustus' rise above his own self in visual terms corresponds to his frequent address to himself in the second and third persons. "Who, then, is speaking, when Faustus speaks of – or to, or about – himself?" (46), Belsey asks. The "subject of the enunciation," that is, the speaker, she explains, "exceeds the subject of the utterance" (50, 52). Belsey presents this as an example of the sense of interiority effected by a "juggling with […] significances,"[44] which prompts her to give room for the self in her account of identity. The "self is always ultimately un-speakable, unuttered," she declares and concludes that "the unified and unique subject of liberal humanism is forever tragically locked within its own silence, uncommunicating" (52). This concession indicates that, after all, it is the "project" not only of an antiquated "humanist criticism," as Belsey still contends it is, "to fill [the] gap" of "a silent self anterior to the utterance, 'that within which passes show'" (49). The self might seem a gap, in terms of its linguistic, textual intelligibility,[45] but it is one that dramatic characters do reckon with.

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[44] Felix Guattari, *Molecular Revolution*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984) 55. Qtd. in Belsey 53.

[45] Following David Chalmers, Steven Pinker identifies an Easy and a Hard Problem about consciousness. In his formulation, the Hard Problem is "why it *feels like something* to have a conscious process going on in one's

The Western sense of identity seems inescapably, and still never completely, textualized. Dramatic characters, for example Faustus, as we saw in Belsey above, suffer from a pressure to verbalize it fully, and they resist the pressure by withholding at least a part of who they are from being available in language and by protecting it from being absorbed in an all-pervasive discourse.[46] This elusive but "meaningful[ly]" "discoherent"[47] part of identity is what I call the *self*. It is this division in identity, the non-coincidence of the subject with the self[48] that Dollimore calls the decenteredness of subjectivity.[49] To see the historical origins of this de- or off-centeredness, we have to turn to Charles Taylor's account of how the notion of identity evolved in western thought. St Augustine's function as a link between Plato and Descartes[50] in developing the perception of the individual who stands in relation "both to context and to interior self"[51] makes the philosopher of Hippo particularly relevant to Renaissance studies.

According to Taylor, St Augustine fused the Platonic distinction between "the bodily and the non-bodily" with the notion of "creation through the Word," as John formulates it in the opening words of his Gospel, to arrive at the "key principle of […] Participation or Likeness" which determines the quality and relative position of everything in the world.[52] Things in the universe are the "external expressions of God's thoughts," the "external realization" of a "meaningful," "rational order." With this comes an injunction against being immersed in the sensual world and the expectation that the "inner man" (129), the soul, directs its attention and love toward "the higher

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head–why there is first-person, subjective experience" (emphasis in original). He quotes Louis Armstrong, who said when he was asked to sum up what jazz was, "When you got to ask what it is, you never get to know." "Consciousness," he affirms, "does not depend on language." It is there even when we temporarily lose "self-awareness." The Hard Problem, Pinker admits, "remains a mystery" for psychologists. Steven Pinker, "The Mystery of Consciousness," *Time* Jan. 29, 2007: 59–70. 60f.

[46] Although analyzing Shakespeare's *King Lear* is not on my agenda, I cannot help referring in this context to Lear's demand that his daughters "speak" about their love for him and Cordelia's decision to say "nothing."

[47] Dollimore lii.

[48] Belsey 52.

[49] Dollimore, "Subjectivity and Social Process," Chapter 10 in *Radical Tragedy* 153–181.

[50] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989) 127.

[51] Piesse 635.

[52] Taylor 127f.

reality" (128), toward "God" above, who is himself "Truth" and truth that "dwells within" (132). To achieve this upward gaze, however, and this is where Augustine departs from Plato, one has to look inward first (129). With this idea, Augustine creates a "language of inwardness," that is, he empowers language to effect and, in the same move, appropriate the inner being that thus becomes, more than the abstract soul, a constituent and integral part of identity. From now on, this language of inwardness will prescribe how to take care of "the health of one's own soul" (130), of one's inner self.

As a consequence of this discursive creation and objectification of the "inner man," we make it "our object of attention" and "become aware of our awareness" in a relationship to ourselves that Taylor calls "radical reflexivity" (130). This "makes me," Taylor says, "a being that can speak of itself in the first person" (131), or at least, I would add, a being that is expected to be able to speak of itself that way and, through the language of inwardness, to reveal and sanitize his or her "inner man." This compulsion to render the self explicit is one aspect of "the inwardness of radical reflexivity" Taylor does not emphasize but which Augustine also "bequeathed […] to the Western tradition of thought" (131). Moreover, William Perkins's writing on the conscience[53] and Michel Foucault's work on the consequences of this discursive generation and invasion of inwardness in *Discipline and Punish*[54] throw this aspect into striking relief.

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[53] When God created man, Perkins declares, "he gave him conscience to be his keeper, to follow him alwaies at his heels, and to dogge him (as we say) and to prie into his actions, and to beare witnesse of them all." In determining the righteousness of individual actions, "conscience is like to a judge that holdeth and assise, & takes notice of inditements, and causeth the most notorious malefactor that is, to hold up his hand at the barre of his judgment." *William Perkins 1558–1602 English Puritanist: His Pioneer Works on Casuistry: "A Discourse of Conscience" and "The Whole Treatise of Cases of Conscience*," ed. Thomas F. Merrill (Nieuwkoop: B. de Graaf, 1966) 9.

[54] Foucault describes a turn in disciplinary theory that took place around 1760 from the objective to punish the body in expiation to "a punishment that acts in depth on the heart, the thoughts, the will, the inclinations." Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (1977; New York: Vintage Books, 1995) 16. Dollimore comments on this saying that, although "the idea of a punishment working internally, on and in the very terms of subjectivity itself, is new in penal theory, […] it is not new as a disciplinary strategy" (lxxvi).

Taylor makes a connection to Renaissance perspectival painting that allows the beholder to experience "a new distance" between him- or herself and the object. "In the new art," he explains, "space becomes important, and position in space" (201). When Taylor formulates the availability of "'inner' objects" from a special "standpoint" in visual terms, we cannot help remembering the pleasing narrative Iago offers Othello about him, with a "vantage point"—the vanishing point, in terms of Renaissance painting—, almost "outside the world of things" (131) as Othello experiences them. This helps us understand the irresistible power Othello might hope to enjoy "directly" at "the door of truth"[55] where Iago promises to lead him. The "painted surface," Taylor writes in reference to Leon Battista Alberti, "becomes like a window through which we see reality as it appears from that perspective."[56] From the prospect of casting a voyeuristic glance at Desdemona's body in an illicit act, Othello might hope to turn her into an object in such a perspective and to enjoy the thrill of this "new distance and separation" that frees him from "being englobed by what is depicted" (202). Shakespeare exploits the erotic potential in the power of appropriation the decentered subject gains over the world from rising above him- or herself in the Augustinian reflexivity.

This certainly adds an extra portion of significance to Taylor's ironic remark that "Augustine has a lot to answer for" (131). As a result of the Augustinian architecture of identity, the discursively controlled suprapersonal point of view appears authentic and authoritative, whether it is a Diccon the Bedlam, an Egeon, or a Franklin, who assumes it. Although a higher point of view on "the image" of our own inwardness is "compelling" (131), it is alienating at the same time. When we assume it, we have to realize that "there is something higher than our reason, […] a truth which is criterial for it, […] a standard […] which is not its own making, but beyond it and common to all" (132). In other words, our first-person standpoint is, paradoxically, not our own after all. The humanist achievement of the "autonomous" citizen, as Ullman put it, did not do away with this

[55] William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. Kim F. Hall (Boston, New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007) 3.3.424.
[56] Taylor 201.

alienation; it only began to secularize it and to give it a stronger legal and political hue. In the drama I examine in this dissertation, the higher point of view in visual terms often corresponds to the political and discursive fixation of individual identity. Partly due to the medium of the dramatic genre, the plays foreground the verbal aspect of those "principles of the intelligible order […] which are somehow within us, which we are," as Taylor says, "capable of formulating" (135). Characters are, I contend, like mouthpieces of a truth from above, often even compelled to formulate it, to make it, in Taylor's words, "explicit and full knowledge" (136).

In contrast to the main thrust of the foregoing criticism that refuses to give the self an independent status, Katharine Eisaman Maus opens and explores the "hiatus"[57] between the aspect of identity that is outwardly defined and an "unexpressed" (2) portion of it. This "gap," she argues, generates "epistemological anxieties" and requires "social practices […] to manage it" (2). She calls it an early modern rhetorical tactic to privilege this interior and to brand the "exterior" as "partial, misleading, falsifiable, unsubstantial" (4) in a theatrical metaphor, as Hamlet does.[58] Eisaman Maus seeks to resolve the problems of the "intersubjective" understanding of the invisible self in paying close attention to "the conditions of the performance"[59] and to "extraliterary cultural phenomena" (32). My focus, in contrast, is not on the cognitive aspect of the self but rather on the way individual characters experience a sense of their identity of which the self is a hardly knowable but often keenly felt component.

The studies that follow do not argue for a material existence of the self. In fact, the persona is also a construct parts of which are, as Jacques Lacan claims, of no more than a "fictional"[60] character. However, in contrast to the vague but inescapable sense of self, the persona does not just

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[57] Eisaman Maus 1.
[58] "I have that within which passeth show," Hamlet says. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, *The Norton Shakespeare*. *Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York, London: W W Norton, 1997) 1668–1756. 1.2.85.
[59] Eisaman Maus 31.
[60] Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," trans. Alan Sheridan, *Contemporary Literary Criticism: Literary and Cultural Studies*, eds. Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer (New York, London: Longman, 1994) 382–86. 383.

happen to emerge. Characters have to build it up in a sustained effort the success of which often determines the denouement of the plot. Therefore, the study of the changing sense of identity and of its manifestations that make it present for characters is essential to the understanding of early modern English drama and of the notion it helps us create of the individual. For dramatic characters, identity is a site of struggle. In tragedies, its outcome is a matter of life and death; in comedies, it rewards characters with, or deprives them of, a chance to live a meaningful life.

Chapter 1

Early Tudor Self-Fashioning: Coming of Age in *Gammer Gurton's Needle*

1. Introduction

Gammer Gurton's Needle is an early Tudor university comedy from the period of Edward VI or the first years of Elizabeth I.[1] It is a Humanistic text (xxv), a comedy written, on the one hand, in response to contemporary popular belief in witchcraft and demonic forces, and, on the other, in celebration of a youth's successful struggle for an independent sense of identity. Henry Bradley, the play's "first modern editor" (xxi), praises it for its "real wit […] and the clever portraiture of character." At the same time, he atrributes the low esteem of the play to an excess of the "very rudimentary kind of humor which turns on physically disgusting suggestions" and which is, he says, "no longer amusing to educated people."[2] Characters are lifelike, Bradley admits, but he asserts confidently that the play as a whole "does not, of course, rise above the level of farce" (203). Charles Whitworth calls this kind of criticism "patronizing" (xxi), and audience responses to the first American production of the play in 1917 proved, according to Grace Humphrey, that "what may seem in the reading rather vulgar and common seems all right in the acted play."[3]

Gail Kern Paster points out that, in freeing himself from the domination of his mistress, Hodge reaches a state of "bodily autonomy and self-mastery" in an act of "engenderment."[4] Wendy Wall claims that Hodge transfers his allegiance from Gammer Gurton to Diccon in the course of the

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[1] A play titled *Dyccon of Bedlam* was entered in the register of the Company of Stationers for license to print "in the year ending 22 July, 1563." If it is identical with what we know by title as *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, our play must have been performed at Christ's College "before that date." Henry Bradley, "William Stevenson: Critical Essay," *Representative English Comedies*, Charles Mills Gayley ed., vol. 1 (New York, London: Macmillan, 1903) 197–204. 197f. *Gammer Gurton's Needle* was first printed in 1575. Charles Whitworth, "Introduction," *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, ed. Charles Whitworth (London: A & C Black; New York: W W Norton, 1997) ix–xxvi. xi.

[2] Bradley 202.

[3] Grace Humphrey, "*Gammer Gurton's Needle*," *The English Journal* 7.1 (Jan. 1918): 24–28. 24. *JSTOR* 23 June 2014.

[4] Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Discipline of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993) 116.

action and that his "new master"[5] enlarges on the "folly" of the two main female characters (10). Frank Ardolino emphasizes, as Wall does (6), that audiences are informed, already in the Prologue, where the needle is to be found. As a result, Ardolino claims, the play does not focus on the "whodunit puzzle" of how to find the tiny but symbolic object but on "the sociological, religious, and metaphysical structure of the world presented."[6] More specifically, he says, it foregrounds "the labyrinth of erroneous perceptions created by Diccon and the villagers, who cannot see beyond their narrow and circumscribed minds" (18).

My aim in this chapter is to show that in the character of Hodge *Gammer Gurton's Needle* presents the audience with a fresh example of the evolution of a well-rounded character. From the beginning of the third Act, when Hodge emerges triumphantly, he presents in his persona a conscious perception of his bodily existence together with a superior rhetoric. He rises above the chaotic power of occult beliefs in a single gesture as if it had not touched his self. Language and perception are fundamental aspects of a character's being in his or her dramatic world, and the meanings they generate come together to strengthen Hodge's sense of identity. The plot of *Gammer Gurton's Needle* represents the progress of this young domestic servant from childish dependence to self-assertion. In the course of the action, sexual desire propels Hodge's journey and enables him to turn obedience into mockery.

The stakes for Hodge are high: he has to prepare himself for a meeting with his future wife, Kirstian Clack, Tom Simon's maid, who "comes hither tomorrow."[7] Hodge is full of uncertainty concerning the prospects of his planned courtship, but the maid has already given him an encouraging sign of affection: "She smiled on me the last Sunday, when ich put off my cap" (2.1.64).

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[5] Wendy Wall, "'Household Stuff': The Sexual Politics of Domesticity and the Advent of English Comedy," *English Literary History* (*ELH*) 65.1 (Spring 1998): 1–45. 9.
[6] Frank Ardolino, "Misperception and Protestant Reading in *Gammer Gurton's Needle*," *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 50.1 (Winter 2010): 17–34. 19. *Project Muse*, 4 Aug. 2014.
[7] Mr. S., *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, ed. Charles Whitworth, The New Mermaids Ser. (London: A & Century Black; New York: W W Norton, 1997) 2.1.62. All references are to this edition unless otherwise noted.

Hodge has to give way to his burgeoning sexual desire, but he has to do it in a socially acceptable way: he has to learn how to fashion himself. His way from dependence to an active creation of his male identity also takes him through a period of defiant behavior and an experiment with obsession. However, Hodge's delusional perception ultimately leads him to a holistic experience of himself: he finds himself again in his body once he has risen above perceptual delusion, in a superiority of wit and a gendered male identity. At the moment of real physical pain, he recognizes that he regained the sense of himself that he once had. For him, finding is a re-cognition.

2. The Source of Gammer Gurton's Power

With "all things […] tumbled and clean out of fashion" (15), the folks in the house seem even to Diccon the Bedlam to be "not well in their wits" (1.1.18). This is Gammer Gurton's house: a house of temporary misrule with its inhabitants wailing, "Alack and wellaway!" (1.1.20). They do not even seem to notice Diccon's arrival, who can thus filch "a slip of bacon" (1.1.22) unobserved. Tib, Gammer Gurton's maid, complains of being maltreated and dressed merely in "a few rotten rags" (1.3.8). Her mistress, she says, has been possessed by a sudden frenzy, so that she and Cock, Gammer Gurton's boy, as she says, "have felt it on our bones" (14). The reason for her violent outburst is, Tib informs Hodge, no bigger matter than the loss of "her nee'le" (24–26). Spotting Gib, the cat, "in the milk pan" (33), Gammer Gurton acts on the spur of a sudden anger with a staff in her hand and "swapped the breeches down" (34) with a histrionic gesture. Thus she creates an excuse to declare that the needle is lost and an explanation why she leaves the "breeches lie for all this never the near" (39) completion.

In Gammer Gurton's exalting language, the needle assumes a symbolic significance. She comes onstage "crawling" (42) and blaming "Gib and the milk pan […] and ill luck together" for the loss of her "dear" and "fair long straight nee'le," of her "joy," and her "only treasure" (1.4.2–5). This lament suggests that she might be actually bewailing the imminent loss of her young, vigorous, and

hard-working servant, Hodge. "As God himself he knoweth," she emphasizes, "ne'er one beside chave" (2.4.12). Gammer Gurton claims to have had one single needle only, although "needles were proverbially trivial in the sixteenth century."[8]

Hodge commits himself fully to the purpose. While Gammer Gurton seeks his favor and ingratiates herself with him, she orders her other two servants to submit themselves to his service. She controls Tib and Cock by associating them with moral depravity and the filth of the material world in and around the household. She calls Tib a "whore" and orders her to run "to th'end here of the town" (1.4.9) to rake through a "heap of dust" the maid carried out in her lap before. In doing so, Gammer Gurton insists, Tib must not leave a "straw unturned" (12). Moreover, she has to take in the reality of matter through her senses by stooping and looking "down to the ground – to it" and taking "some pain!" (14). She tells Cock, her boy, to "grope behind the old brass pan" to "find an old shoe" and to look in it "well" for "an inch of a white tallow candle" (1.4.40–42), so that Hodge can conduct the search by its light.

The maid and the boy dutifully obey. "Chave tossed and tumbled yonder heap o'er and over again," Tib reports to her mistress on the result, "And winnowed it through my fingers as men would winnow grain." She seems to have followed Gammer Gurton's instructions to the letter: "Not so much as a hen's turd but in pieces I tare it," she explains in detail, "Or whatsoever clod or clay I found, I did not spare it" (1.5.2–5). While he pokes fun at Hodge's perceptual delusion, Cock also projects his desire on what he can see: "By my troth, Gammer," he exclaims, "methought your nee'le here I saw, / But when my fingers touched it, I felt it was a straw" (48f). Tib identifies with Hodge's interest to such an extent that she attempts to make even finer distinctions in her perception: "See, Hodge, what is this?," she urges. "May it not be within it?" (50). Finding "cat's turd" inside the straw gives Hodge an opportunity to rise above his fellow servants in imitation of the way Gammer

[8] Curtis Perry, "Commodity and Commonwealth in *Gammer Gurton's Needle*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 42.2 (Spring 2002): 217–34. 221. *Academic OneFile*, 19 Feb. 2011.

Gurton humiliates them: “It were well done to make thee eat it” (54), he tells Tib, elaborating on the scatology she engaged in earlier.

At the same time, Gammer Gurton depicts in elaborate images her eagerness to support Hodge in his endeavor to establish himself in the world. In her act of mending the breeches, she promises, she would use “full good double thread, / And set a patch on either knee”—if at all “ich could find my nee’le” (1.4.20f, 19), she adds. She describes herself in vivid pictures “looking a long hour” in “the house and at the door.” Regretfully, she says, “all was in vain” (35, 34, 36).

In her effort to prove her dedication to Hodge’s success, Gammer Gurton often engages in Catholic practices. She swears upon the cross (“the reed,” 1.4.19) and calls upon Saint Sithe, “a seventh-century East Saxon queen” to “send” the needle “home again” (22 and n). “Down, Tib, on thy knees, I say! Down, Cock, to the ground!” (1.5.41), she commands to impress Hodge with enlisting the religious devotion of the entire household in the service of one single aim. When her boy and maid kneel, she makes a solemn oath:

> To God I make a vow, and so to good Saint Anne:
> A candle shall they have apiece, get it where I can,
> If I may my nee’le find in one place or in other. (42–44)

The unnecessary search and the supplication and prayer it entails allow Gammer Gurton to elevate Hodge in importance within the household and thus create a hierarchy where Tib and Cock must submit to his interest. The Catholic practices Gammer administers serve the aim of binding Hodge in loyalty to the house.

The fact that the prayer and the offered sacrifice purportedly aim at the recovery of a needle that Gammer Gurton has in fact deliberately hidden rather than lost compromises the represented Catholic practices as means to a questionable end. The song opening the second Act further undermines the authority of Catholic devotion when it mocks friars or monks by mentioning a man “that wears a hood” (line 8) as a suitable drinking fellow.

The mistress also poses in the role of a mother figure who orchestrates the search benevolently instructing and caring for her servants. She attempts to impress Hodge by appearing to be his nurturer. She excuses herself to him for allegedly losing the needle by claiming that it happened "what time ich me up hasted / To save the milk set up for thee" (1.4.29). When Hodge urges Cock to light the candle by threatening him to "catch thine ears," she calls on him to moderate his anger: "Beat him not, Hodge," she tells him, "but help the boy and come you two together" (1.4.47, 49).

3. Diccon the Bedlam's External Point of View

Once Diccon wins Hodge's trust by promising him external help in his search and scares him away with the prospect of conjuring the devil, he remains alone onstage and offers his comment on the action. Being a vagrant, he does not belong to the community; what is more, he is not only a character, but he also in part directs the action and observes it as if from an outside point of view. He calls the lesson he taught Hodge "a cleanly prank" (2.2.3), and he conceptualizes the loss of the needle as "a matter worthy glozing[9]" (7). He comments on it in a meta-theatrical sense saying, "A man […] might make a play" of it without adding a "word to this they say" (10f), meaning the dialogue he partly overhears, partly participates in.

The success of his "prank" encourages Diccon to "take the charge / This matter further to enlarge" and "make […] good sport" (2.2.13f, 18) in doing so. In the second scene of the second Act, he becomes the "author" of a "tale" (52) about Gammer Gurton's stolen cock and about the suspicion Tib raised in her that her neighbor, Dame Chat, stole it. When he divulges the details of his invention to Dame Chat, he orders her, too, to keep it secret, so that "Diccon bear no blame" (58). Warning Dame Chat that Gammer Gurton may call on her to "brawl" with her "about her cock"

[9] "glossing, writing a scholarly commentary upon" (2.2.7n).

(63) is, as Diccon says, only "the one end tapped[10] of this my short device" (2.3.1). He still needs to "broach t'other too" (2), to make his "play" work. His aim in fomenting discord is, he claims, to reveal "what lieth in both" of the "hearts" (4) of the women.

When he goes about to trigger action at the other end of his "device," that is, in Gammer Gurton, he addresses the audience directly and makes them complicit in his "sport:" "Be still awhile, and say nothing," he directs them and requests that they "Make here a little roomth" (2.4.2). In his words, and possibly in his accompanying gesture, Diccon here oversteps the boundary of the imaginary "theatrical space [which] is created by the performance"[11] and crosses into the architecturally given "theater space," that is, the "physical space in which a performance takes place" (11). The theater space exists, Hanna Scolnicov asserts, "independently of, and prior to, any performance" (12). Whitworth names this space, in the case of *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, as "the hall of Christ's College" in Cambridge. From this instance, when Diccon addresses the spectators, and one in the third Act, when Hodge does the same, Whitworth infers that "Clearly some members of the audience were very near if not actually on the playing area; thus a large, elevated stage, separate from the spectator area, seems out of the question."[12] The physical conditions in the hall, therefore, facilitated such a crossing of a boundary.

By involving them in his scheme, Diccon invites the audience to identify with his perspective, and he himself takes on their point of view. Diccon lives outside the social network and depends solely on his wits, but he has a function in the play more important than merely "to expose and comment on the follies of others," as Douglas Duncan points out.[13] Whitworth comments on

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[10] "opened" (2.3.1).
[11] Hanna Scolnicov, "Theater Space, Theatrical Space, and the Theatrical Space Without," *The Theatrical Space*, Themes in Drama Ser. 9, ed. James Redmond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 11–26. 12.
[12] Charles Whitworth, "Introduction," *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, ed. Charles Whitworth (London: A & C Black; New York: W W Norton, 1997) ix–xxvi. xxiii.
[13] Douglas Duncan, "Gammer Gurton's Needle and the Concept of Humanist Parody," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 27.2 Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama (Spring 1987): 177–196. 186. *JSTOR*, 19 Feb. 2011.

this function, saying, he "straddles the boundary between play world and audience."[14] This creates the hybrid sense in the audience of a position from which, on the one hand, the action seems to take place in a "delimited space, a magic circle marked off from the mundane and ordinary,"[15] and, on the other hand, it somehow still appears possible to interfere with it. This is Diccon the Bedlam's ambiguous position within the play, and, in the course of the action, the audience's perception inadvertently slides into it.

To a certain extent, characters whom Diccon easily dupes appear like marionettes under his control—except for Hodge. The young servant, who is not comfortable with his status in Gammer Gurton's household, has an inclination to perceive his own situation as if it were fictional, as if he were no longer constrained by its actual conditions. When he least controls his own reactions, he betrays a sense of being in the theater space of Christ's College and thus he violates the precept that, as Scolnicov formulates, "the character has no existence outside the theatrical space."[16] Even though Diccon draws a "circle plat"[17] (2.1.90) for protection against the "long paws" (93) of the devil before he purports to conjure the devil, Hodge cannot help fouling his trousers. At this moment, he is "put besides his part"[18] and says, "ich must beray the hall!" (2.2.106). According to the editor, Hodge here "refers to the hall […] where the play was performed" (106n). Once he has "amend[ed]" his "breech" with a "thong" (3.1.10, 3) and is in full possession of his masculine identity, he transcends his role deliberately and, armed with a "*staff*" (3.3.34 SD), orders the audience to "Stand out one's way, that ich kill none in the dark!" (36). Hodge reaches this level of confidence as Diccon's student in how to master his own desire through discourse and make it work in a difficult social situation.

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[14] Whitworth xix.
[15] Scolnicov 14.
[16] Scolnicov 14.
[17] "flat, horizontal." "Diccon presumably draws a circle on the ground" (2.1.90n, 89–90n).
[18] Shakespeare, "Sonnet 23," *The Norton Shakespeare*. *Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York, London: W W Norton, 1997) 1930f. l.2.

Diccon's strength is in his ability to let characters speak, express their hearts' desire, and to make them act upon it. In this sense, the vice figure of the play anticipates Iago's technique of helping "events in the womb of time"[19] unfold. As in *Othello*, so in *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, the discursive control over fellow characters' action entails, and corresponds to, a rise above them to a point of view, in the visual sense, which is still within the perceptual horizon of the play but at an extreme point of it, exactly like the vanishing point in Filippo Brunelleschi's invention of, as Catherine Belsey calls it, "monocular perspective"[20] in 1425.[21] Sebastiano Serlio determined the privileged vantage point, "the seat of the monarch," in his design of a Renaissance Italian theater later, in 1545, in terms of this mathematical perspective. Vincenzo Scamozzi would then realize this plan in his theater in Sabbioneta, Italy, in 1588.[22] Serlio located the *l'œil du prince*, "the prince's eye," roughly opposite the vanishing point of the perspective scenery, which he carried behind the back wall of the stage. Similar to the nature of the vanishing point compared to that of other objects in perspective scenery, Diccon's position with respect to the other characters of the play is ambiguous. He is the point of entry for the audience into the magic of the theater, our reference in placing other characters in his unifying perspective, and our vantage point in interpreting the characters' limited field of vision.

Although it provides vital support for Hodge at a critical moment in his effort to come of age, Diccon's "cleanly prank" becomes an art for its own sake. His "gear" (2.4.1) emerges as a gratuitous "sport" for the sake of mere entertainment in the way he practices it on Gammer Gurton and Dame Chat. The emotions stirring in Hodge strike us as genuine, and they come to fruition in the promise of marrying the maid he has fallen in love with before the action begins. On the other hand, Gammer

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[19] William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. Kim F. Hall (Boston, New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007) 1.3.355.
[20] Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (London and New York: Methuen, 1985) 24.
[21] Samuel Y. Edgerton, The Mirror, the Window, and the Telescope: How Renaissance Linear Perspective Changed our Vision of the Universe, Cornell Paperbacks Ser. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009) 90.
[22] Oscar Gross Brockett, *History of the Theater* (Boston, London, Sydney, Toronto: Allyn and Bacon, 1987) 173.

Gurton cannot reveal her actual motive for lamenting the loss of the needle, which thus appears as a cover to displace her wish to bind Hodge to the household. However, to save face, she has to go along with, and fall victim to, Diccon's provocation. Iago's technique will be hauntingly similar to Diccon's. As A. C. Bradley comments on the vice's character in *Othello*, Iago is not a man of action but an "artist," an "inarticulate poet"[23] who creates a plot and imposes it on his immediate surroundings. However, while Iago "rehearses" his plot "in downright earnest" (198) and is eventually "caught in his own web" (199) in a "catastrophe" that comes out wrong (198), Diccon will be peacefully integrated in the community.

As Iago will do to Othello, Diccon divulges part of a "tale" he himself "author[ed]" and makes Gammer Gurton ask for more in the hope that she can enter a coherent fiction that, as a result of the effort she invests in acting it out, would rise to the status of reality:

> GAMMER GURTON My goodly tossing spurrier's[24] nee'le chave lost ich wot not where.
>
> […]
>
> DICCON If this be all, good Gammer, I warrant you all is save.
>
> GAMMER GURTON Why, know you any tidings which way my nee'le is gone?
>
> (2.4.10, 13f)

Once she becomes the questioner, Gammer Gurton has to maintain her initial lie and bear the unfolding consequences. She eagerly picks up the line Diccon offers her as an entry into the magic of a play within the play and connects it back to the key moment of departure, the actual event in her experience that sparked the original invention she would now enlarge on in concert with Diccon. When she hears that her "neighbour […] stooped me down and up she took a needle or a pin" (17f), Gammer Gurton cannot help exclaiming,

> It was my nee'le, Diccon, ich wot, for here, even by this post,

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[23] A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on* Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992) 198.
[24] "spur-maker's" (2.4.10n).

Ich sat what time as ich up start, and so my nee'le it lost.

Who was it, life son? Speak, ich pray thee, and quickly tell me that. (20–22)

The script is ready in Diccon's head, and it will soon live its own life independently of the original pretext, the mending of the breeches, to which it has, by now, lost all connection. To this end, like to that of Dame Chat, the injunction applies: "Let not be know I told you of it, how well soever ye speed" (43), Diccon reminds Gammer Gurton, as he did Dame Chat before. "Here will the sport begin" (2.5.1), Diccon announces to the audience. In the farce that ensues, involving Gammer Gurton and Dame Chat, the neighbors are about to entertain the spectators with the rare spectacle of a fight where nothing of real value, except for the entertainment itself, is at stake. "He that may tarry by it awhile […], I warrant him […]," Diccon as the "author" is confident, "he shall see all the sport" (7f).

4. Hodge Fashions Himself

In spite of the respect Gammer Gurton commands the other two servants to pay him and the fervor the mistress herself shows in trying to further his aim, Hodge is increasingly unsatisfied with the conditions of his keeping. Initially, he is preoccupied only with his own unfavorable appearance. He refers to himself as "dressed" in "filthy clay" (1.2.4 and n) and complains about "a gash, a shameful hole" (7) in his breeches. His description of himself is in harsh contrast to the apparent wealth of his mistress,[25] to whom he complains about his duty "to dig and delve in water, mire and clay, / Sossing and possing[26] in the dirt still from day to day" (1.4.25f).

In the second Act, Hodge reveals to Diccon that he does not even have enough to eat. After having worked in the field all day without provisions, he had "Neither butter, cheese, milk, onions,

[25] Diccon mentions Gammer Gurton's maid, Tib, and her boy, Cock (1.1.16f), characters in the play. Doctor Rat refers to her cow and sow (4.1.22).
[26] "splashing and tramping" (1.4.26n).

flesh nor fish, / Save this poor piece of barley bread," he grumbles and calls it, with an edge of sarcasm, "a pleasant costly dish" (2.1.13f). He even suggests he is treated on a level with animals when he calls his dinner a "piece of dry horse-bread" (17). In his hunger, his senses focus on his own body in an intense interoception, that is, a sensation in interior organs: "My gusts they yawl, crawl and all my belly rumbleth," he tells Diccon and adds, "The puddings[27] cannot lie still, each one over other tumbleth" (19f).

His mistress's display of helpfulness does not lay Hodge's suspicion to rest. His efforts to make the seemingly obtuse Diccon understand it helps him formulate his predicament clearly. The cat might have licked up the milk and eaten even the bacon,[28] he ponders, but "there was a fouler fault," he adds: "My Gammer ga' me the dodge"[29] (2.1.34). And again, he elaborates on the poor condition of his apparel as a result of his mistress's neglect of him. "See'st not how cham rent and torn, my heels, my knees, and my breech?" (35), he laments and concludes, "My Gammer, cham ashamed to say, by God, served me not well" (39). By pretending to be dull or simply hard of hearing, Diccon forces Hodge to describe the needle in striking visual images: it is a "little thing with an hole in the end," Hodge begins, but then makes it seem "as bright as any silver." He calls it "Small, long, sharp at the point" first, but then magnifies it to appear "straight as any pillar" (43f). By promising to help and urging him to "keep counsel in this case" (53), Diccon directs Hodge's attention to what he himself can do to extricate himself from the conundrum. The belief that Diccon can indeed lead him to the needle makes Hodge burst out in an enthusiastic six-line speech full of action verbs in the first person singular, starting like this: "Chill run, chill ride, chill dig, chill delve, chill toil, chill trudge, shalt see" (55). As a direct result of his interaction with the tramp, Hodge seems to have made a pledge.

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[27] "intestines" (2.1.20n)
[28] In fact, Diccon has stilled his hunger with it (1.1.22).
[29] "tricked me, let me down" (2.1.34n).

Diccon contrasts Gammer Gurton's Catholic worship with his own profane ceremony. Hodge first has to answer the question of what makes his appearance so crucial to him. "Kirstian Clack, Tom Simson's maid, by the mass, comes hither tomorrow," he blurts it out at last and reveals his hope to win her affections: "Cham not able to say between us what may hap; / She smiled on me the last Sunday, when ich put off my cap" (2.1.62–64). Diccon acknowledges the "weight" (65) of the matter and orders secrecy. In the following thoroughly sacrilegious ritual that Diccon administers, Hodge lays his hand on Diccon's buttocks, in lieu of the "book" (69), and swears allegiance to him. To Hodge, this appears more authentic and, therefore, more efficacious at recovering the needle than Gammer's theatrical prayer, offering, and supplication.

While Gammer Gurton values him above her other domestic servants, at least in words, Hodge now appears to be Diccon's bondsman: he owes him obedience and trust. He submitted his labor to his mistress—his senses to the search; now he has to work for Diccon's "pleasure" and keep his "counsel close" (2.1.76, 74). He could afford to be skeptical about the sincerity of Gammer Gurton's intentions, but now he is obliged to believe in Diccon's words and follow his advice. Therefore, when this bondage forces him to go beyond the limits of his hardiness, he does not have the freedom to argue with him. He reacts with immediate bodily symptoms to Diccon's suggestion that he seek the help of the "great devil […] with some pretty charm" (83, 85) to find the needle. In his fear, he first begins to sweat (87), then he has to "make a curtsy of water" (100), and finally he defiles the hall (105f) and runs away.

Since Hodge took an oath of trust, Diccon's words have the force of authenticity on him. However, Diccon undermines his own credibility by deliberately confusing him. To Hodge's eager questioning about the diabolical revelation concerning the whereabouts of the needle, he responds with three alternative directions:

> Between Chat and the rat and the cat the needle is hid.
>
> Now whether Gib our cat have eat it in her maw,

> Or Doctor Rat our curate have found it in the straw,
>
> Or this Dame Chat your neighbour have stolen it, God he knoweth.
>
> (2.3.24–27)

As Gammer Gurton did before him by diverting the search away from where the needle is actually hidden, Diccon frustrates Hodge's expectation of external guidance by deferring the point of its availability beyond the time when it could still be of use. "But by the morrow at this time, we shall learn how the matter goeth," he declares and adds in an officious manner, "'Tis not possible to make it sooner appear" (28, 30). Diccon's "great devil" (2.1.83) is just as unhelpful and misleading as Gammer Gurton was.

The diffuse and delayed answer triggers in Hodge the urge to take matters into his own hands and determine who he is. Diccon has provoked him into formulating his own desire, then withdrew from helping him achieve its object. This leaves Hodge alone with a mixed sense of insufficiency and anticipation: he is aware of the goal he wishes to reach, but he knows he is not prepared—and the opportunity is rapidly approaching. At this moment, he comes up with a plan of action. He suggests,

> Alas, Diccon, then chave no shift, but, lest ich tarry too long,
>
> Hie me to Sim Glover's shop, there to seek for a thong,
>
> Therewith this breech to tache and tie as ich may (2.3.31–33).

He still includes Diccon as an external driving force in his design, but the vagrant is evasive. "Tomorrow, Hodge, if we chance to meet," he responds hesitantly, "shalt see what I will say" (34).

Hodge surpasses even Tib in her dedication to the stimuli from the material world. He is proud of the acute power of his senses and demands from his fellow servants a similar attention to sensual impulses. His eyes, he boasts, "see […] well" a "hundred things that be abroad" (1.4.27). He relies on his superior vision which, even by the mere light of a candle and with the help of his tactition, would locate the tiny object, while, he tells his mistress, "you know it not when you it see!"

(38). Then, when the boy fails to light the candle, Hodge turns to him in indignation: "Art deaf, thou whoreson boy? Cock, I say! Why canst not hear's?" (48).

Hodge devotes himself fully to the experience of the search, leaving no room for a critical evaluation of his sensations. According to Cock, he

> lieth tumbling and tossing amidst the floor,
> Raking there some fire to find among the ashes dead
> Where there is not one spark so big as a pin's head. (1.5.11–13)

Beyond what is actually there to perceive, Hodge even imagines he can see what should be there for the successful completion of the search. This way, like Tib, who refers to the location of the needle in a tautology without being able to specify it, Hodge also anticipates the moment of recognition when the needle will be present again to the senses and the multiple displacements will cease. To find it, however, he first has to light the candle Cock has produced. "At last, in a dark corner," Cock continues his report on Hodge's compulsive delusion,

> two sparks he thought he sees,
> Which were indeed nought else but Gib our cat's two eyes.
> "Puff!" quoth Hodge, thinking thereby to have fire without doubt. (14–16)

Hodge is persistent in his misperception that what he blows is, in fact, glowing ember; he takes the repeated winks of the cat's eyes for the sparkling of fire. He follows the cat up the stairs even at the price of breaking "both his shins" (25) in his fear that Gib would set the house on fire.

Once he understands the "special cause" of his own "sorrow" (2.1.61) in the act of identifying the particular person, Kirstian Clack, for whom he undertook the vain search in a delusion, Hodge has half-way released himself from being Gammer Gurton's possession and from expecting help from the saints she worships. Now, he changes masters and in a sacrilegious mock ritual swears allegiance to the vagrant Diccon, who pokes fun at his fear of the devil. Hodge does not have many choices left. He has to face Kirstian Clack without help from heaven or hell. He decides to

fashion himself with the material available for mending his breeches. He enters Sim Glover's shop and transforms his appearance by turning what was the focus of his painful self-consciousness into a reason for pride, that is, changing a lack, "a shameful hole," into a proud sign of masculinity, a conspicuous presence. Out of a "need to be so straight and hard" (3.1.5), he purchases "a thong" (3), and he borrows the Glover's "nawl[30] to set the jib[31] forward" (6). With "these two," he "amends" his "breech" (10). Emphasis here is on the physical durability of the material and on the conspicuous appearance of Hodge's eligibility: "Tom Tankard's great bald curtal[32] […] could not break" (4) the thong. Hodge's desire is visible in his appearance.

An emphasis on display goes along with a skilled use of language in Hodge to establish an independent point of view and a critical distance to the authority of both Gammer Gurton and Diccon. To his mistress's attempt to involve him in the fiction of Dame Chat as the thief of the needle Hodge responds by discrediting its author, Diccon. "It is a vengeable knave, Gammer, 'tis a bonable[33] whoreson" (3.2.10), he asserts in a new confidence. At the same time, Hodge's language is not merely confident, but it acquires a new rhetorical power in its vivid imagery. In possession of the proper bodily contour—his "jib" set "forward," as he formulated it, which fills him with anticipation—Hodge becomes especially skilful in the use of auditory and visual images.

Instead of seeing things, some of which were there in front of him, but some he only wished to be there, as happened to him in the course of the vain search Gammer Gurton was conducting, now Hodge makes his mistress have frightening visions. His model is Diccon's gesture of authorship, and his starting point is his own uncontrollable fear of the image the vagrant conjured up for him. By way of emulating the vagrant's pose as entertainer, Hodge now hopes to induce a similar condition of helpless awe in Gammer to reverse his dependence on her in the hierarchical

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[30] "awl" (3.1.6n).
[31] "forward-most triangular sail in certain systems of ship's rigging" (3.1.6n).
[32] "piebald horse with a docked tail" (3.1.4).
[33] "abominable" (3.2.10n).

relationship. Similar to the mixture of description and fantasy in his own compulsive delusions, the pictures he deliberately conjures use ekphrasis with poetic license. He reminds his mistress of the pictorial representation of a devil in continental tradition.

> Saw ye never Friar Rush
>
> Painted on a cloth, with a sidelong cow's tale,
>
> And crooked cloven feet and many a hooked nail? (3.2.18–20),

Hodge asks his mistress, adding that he himself saw "the devil" that had "such another" visage "even what face Friar Rush had" (22).

In depicting an image to control his mistress's perception, Hodge is tapping into a long oral tradition that became manifest in print in England around the time of the writing of *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, possibly late in Edward VI's reign or early in that of Elizabeth I. As George Lyman Kittredge explains in his comment on this passage of the play, the "diabolically entertaining exploits" of the "Continental Friar Rush […] became the subject of an English chapbook not later than 1569. […] Reginald Scot, in 1584, referred to Rush's printed 'storie,' styled him 'Rush of England,' and compared him with the impish Hutgin (Hudgin) of Hildesheim, whose performances are assigned to the year 1132."[34] This indicates that Hodge's power over Gammer Gurton's perception derives partly from a theme in an ongoing popular discourse and text production.

By fleshing out details of the devil's appearance, Hodge spurs Gammer Gurton on to join him in completing a complex image under his guidance. "But Hodge," she begins, "had he no horns to push?" "As long as your two arms!" (3.2.17f), the youth acknowledges his mistress's effort to do her part. In this moment, the image even assumes a tactile quality. To further overwhelm her with the collaborative mental experience, Hodge also complements the picture with sound. "'O!' the knave cried," Hodge now purports to impersonate Diccon, "'Ho, ho!' He roared and he thundered" (13), he

[34] George Lyman Kittredge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929) 216.

alleges. "Now Jesus mercy, Hodge!," his mistress exclaims as a spectator who also shapes the performance, which is in fact a reprise of Diccon's earlier show, "Did Diccon in him bring?" (23). While the vagrant frustrated Hodge's reliance on him in his endeavor to become his own man and to have a family, Hodge, identifying with Diccon's role and taking his position, now provides Gammer Gurton with specific information to support her fiction of the lost needle: "The devil, when Diccon bad him (ich heard him wondrous well) / Said plainly here before us, that Dame Chat had your nee'le" (25f). In saying this, Hodge in fact reaffirms Diccon's invitation to Gammer to enlarge on and act out, with a specific direction, her search for the "lost" needle in her own story of displacement. Once he releases himself from her fiction with Diccon's help, Hodge, by assuming the vagrant's transcendental position in the play, manipulates Gammer Gurton's perception to change places with her: he locks her up in the same virtual reality she wove around the tiny object to possess him.

Gammer Gurton's Needle gives the impression that fiction can be clearly separated from reality and that Hodge's public persona is firmly based on the latter. He rises above the chaos of the self that contains elements of Catholic worship, superstition, subjection to female rule and witchcraft that ultimately all appear as dreamlike and nightmarish fantasies. Hodge's struggle is driven by an urge similar to what Jacques Lacan calls the "insufficiency in [man's] natural reality."[35] Lacan terms the "drama" of this struggle for a unified sense of the self in a body image as the "*mirror stage*," a crucial phase in the individual's development toward sexual maturity. Although the "internal thrust" of this change "is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation," "to a form of […] totality" (384), Lacan argues, the "transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image" (382) results merely in a visual construct that lends "the agency of the ego" a "fictional" (383) character. Nonetheless, the ending of the play creates the expectation that, based

[35] Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," trans. Alan Sheridan, *Contemporary Literary Criticism: Literary and Cultural Studies*, eds. Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer (New York, London: Longman, 1994) 382–86. 384.

on his newly acquired body image and rhetorical skills, Hodge will be able to integrate successfully into his social reality.

As Diccon had done earlier, Hodge directs Gammer Gurton to Dame Chat. His future does not depend on her prayer, her offerings, or her insincere "promise" to "sew thy breeches" (1.4.20) anymore, so he can safely say, "Bid her give you the nee'le; 'tis none of hers, but yours" (3.2.30). The irony of the two women's farcical battle depends on the mismatch between the object coveted and the one allegedly withheld. Here, too, Dame Chat takes Gammer Gurton's demand that she "give me mine own" (3.3.3) to mean the "goodly fair red cock" that was supposedly stolen from Hodge's mistress "this last night" (2.2.38). The fight is thus not merely fought about *one* object that has, in fact, never been lost, but it unfolds around a separate false pretense that each contestant fiercely defends.[36] According to Whitworth, throughout the scene that he calls "the play's centrepiece," the two women are at "utter cross-purposes" as a result of Diccon's intrigue (3.3n). This renders the ideational background of Diccon's "sport" not merely complex, elaborate, and gratuitous, but also entirely beside the point, that is, Hodge's progress toward maturity and social integration.

5. Gammer Gurton's Identity

The farcical "centrepiece" in the third scene of the third Act develops our sense of Gammer Gurton's identity by adding a repeated accusation of witchcraft to her Catholic practices of worship. In the course of the physical encounter between the two women, Dame Chat calls her neighbor an "old witch" (3.3.15), an "old gib"[37] (17), an "arrant witch" (22), and a "withered witch" (47). Instead of clearing her name of the association, Gammer characteristically responds to these defamations by calling Dame Chat licentious: a "ramp," a "rig" (18), a "bawdy bitch" (22), etc. In addition, she

[36] The dialogue consistently avoids making either of the pretenses explicit. Gammer Gurton vehemently asserts that "Mine own goods I will have;" Dame Chat retorts, "What, wilt thou make me a thief, and say I stole thy good?" (3.3.9, 12), etc.
[37] "cat (disparagingly, an old woman)" (3.3.17n).

curses her after Dame Chat denies having stolen her needle and defeats her in fight. In the presence of Doctor Rat, the curate, Gammer Gurton says to Master Bailey, "This drab, she keeps away my good, the devil he might her snare!" (5.2.116). Although Gammer Gurton might not be a witch, the play mingles her Catholic worship with a tinge of the occult.

Accusations of witchcraft could be a means of undermining especially a woman's reputation. Due to the clandestine nature of the activity it referred to, the label did not rest on clear criteria, and was thus difficult to refute. George Lyman Kittredge quotes G. L. Burr, saying, "Magic itself is actual and universal. But witchcraft never was. It was but a shadow, a nightmare: the nightmare of a religion, the shadow of a dogma."[38] Kittredge claims that "the essential element in black witchcraft is *maleficium* — the working of harm to the bodies and goods of one's neighbors by means of evil spirits or of strange powers derived from intercourse with such spirits. […] Without this popular belief in *maleficium*, the initial suspicions and complaints which were the starting-point of all prosecutions would have been impossible and inconceivable. *With* this popular belief, the rest was easy."[39] Diccon and Hodge humor Gammer Gurton to trick her into enlarging on a lie, and the fictional world she thus acts out isolates her in what seems to be a false consciousness. Her oddity is largely facilitated by Diccon, the confessed "author of this tale" (2.2.52), of a "play" which, he admits, even "half a clerk" "might make" (10, 12). Dame Chat labels this partly induced peculiarity in Gammer by repeatedly naming her a "witch" and, together with her Catholic worship, this takes on an added significance as a residual characteristic in Protestant England. Keith Thomas argues, "[l]earned authorities never had any doubt that the weaker sex was more vulnerable to the temptations of Satan."[40] According to statistics, in "Europe as a whole, something like 80 percent of those accused of witchcraft at the courts were women, while in England a figure nearer 90 percent

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[38] G. L. Burr, *The Literature of Witchcraft* (New York: 1890) 238. Qtd. in George Lyman Kittredge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929) 23f.
[39] Kittredge 24. Emphasis in the original.
[40] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic. Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and seventeenth century England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971) 520.

was not uncommon in samples of cases tried at the assizes."[41] This would render Gammer Gurton a candidate for the role of a witch as likely as it would Dame Chat.

However, Gammer Gurton's relationship with her neighbor, Dame Chat, would more compellingly predispose her for an accusation of witchcraft. Usually, "the witch and her victim were two persons who ought to have been friendly towards each other, but were not,"[42] Thomas sums up. Alan Macfarlane gives details of the social background of typical witchcraft accusations. According to him, "it was tensions between neighbors which led to acts of witchcraft. A person was refused some small object and in her anger retaliated by bewitching her refuser."[43] With respect to the audience's judgment of Gammer Gurton's identity as a witch, the trifling value of the needle as a motive for hostilities and fight between female neighbors is especially important. A further view casts an even worse light on Gammer Gurton: most often "it was the victim who had made an open breach in neighborly conducts, rather than the witch." In the play, Gammer Gurton accuses Dame Chat of refusing to "give me mine own, and let me live beside thee" (3.3.3). Consequently, "it was the victim," in our case Dame Chat, "who had reason to feel guilty and anxious at having turned away a neighbor, while the suspect might become hated as the agent who caused such a feeling."[44] Following the typical scenario, then, Dame Chat has a compelling reason, namely guilt, arising from her neighbor's accusation, to expect that Gammer Gurton will repay her lack of charity with an act of witchcraft. As Macfarlane makes clear, "[i]t was usually the person who had done the first wrong under the old ideals of charity who felt himself bewitched" (196). And so, Dame Chat, in the course of a neighborly falling-out, is likely to accuse Gammer Gurton, as she in fact does, of having

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[41] James Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in England 1550–1750* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996) 169.
[42] Thomas 560f.
[43] Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A Regional and comparative Study* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970) 174.
[44] Macfarlane 174.

bewitched her. In addition, she calls her an "old whore" (3.3.33)—an epithet that would also be attached to an actually suspected witch in Essex in 1581.[45]

Critics rarely raise the issue of Gammer Gurton's association with witchcraft, but if they do, like Diane Purkiss, they explicitly deny it. In her analysis of "Witches on Stage," Purkiss cites Old Banks from *The Witch of Edmonton*, who, as she says, "miscalls her [i.e., Sawyer] Gammer Gurton, promising to 'have at your needle of witchcraft',[46] referring to the 1557 comedy's heroine."[47] Purkiss remarks in parentheses that Gammer Gurton "was not a witch."[48] If we consider the play in isolation from its contemporary theological and social context, she might have good reason. But if we do not, and if we add to this that Hodge deceitfully corroborates Gammer Gurton's suspicion that her neighbor "found" the needle "and took it up" (3.2.5) by reporting to her the devil's alleged announcement and that he then even supports her loudly and gleefully in her fight with Dame Chat,[49] it becomes apparent that Hodge emerges clear from a feared encounter and the possible blame that he "consults with the Deuill"[50] by implicating Gammer Gurton in the same.

What is more, Hodge intimates already in the first Act that Gib, Gammer Gurton's cat, might be her familiar. He suspects witchcraft behind his own failure to light the fire he insists he can see in the cat's eyes: "Hodge fell of swearing," Cock reports, "The fire was sure bewitched and therefore would not burn" (1.5.22f). In the same scene, Hodge blames and curses Gib, the cat, then Gib's mother, and "all the generation of cats" (1.5.46) for two reasons: for licking the milk pan clean and for eating a morsel of bacon. The cat disappears upstairs "among the old posts and pins" (1.5.24);

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[45] Macfarlane 159.
[46] William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, John Ford, *The Witch of Edmonton*, ed. Stephen Orgel (New York, London: Garland Publishing, 1980) 4.1.252.
[47] Whitworth (xvii) deems the period of "Mary's reign (mid-1553–8) […] "less likely" as the date of composition for *Gammer Gurton's Needle* "than the latter years of her half-brother Edward's," who ruled England between 1547 and 1553.
[48] Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History*. *Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996) 246.
[49] "Where be your nails?," Hodge provokes Gammer Gurton. "Claw her by the jaws, pull me out both her eyen!" (3.3.30).
[50] James I, *Daemonologie* (Edinburgh, 1597) 29. *Early English Books Online*, 24 June 2014.

the latter are objects that obsessed children commonly vomited and that were also instruments of maleficent witchcraft, according to the records.[51] A Diccon says, one of the three alternative interpretations of the devil's alleged revelation is that Gib, the cat, has eaten the needle. As Sharpe explains, the idea of familiars originated in the practice of "élite magicians and sorcerers in the Middle Ages, [who] were frequently alleged to operate with the assistance of a demonic spirit." As a result, "the idea that a witch was usually assisted by a familiar in the shape of an animal constantly recurred in pamphlet accounts."[52] These data originate from a time somewhat later than the writing of *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, since the first witchcraft pamphlets were published only in 1566 (71). But, as on the basis of these documents Sharpe concludes, events at possession cases were, already at that time, "structured and culturally determined" (199).

Finally, Hodge even suggests that Gib, the cat, might have eaten the needle itself. He tells Gammer Gurton, "there's not within this land / A murrainer[53] cat than Gib is, betwixt the Thames and Tyne" (3.4.6f), and he offers to cut its throat to recover the object. "Chill see," he says in seeming determination, "what devil is in her guts" (18). His intention is clearly to intimidate his mistress, who protests, "What? Nay, Hodge, fie! Kill not our cat!" (15). Hodge drives the mockery even further adding, "ich care not what I kill, ma'[54] God a vow! […] What, thinkst that cham not able?" (16, 19). Hodge's threat is a sign of his confident use of the rhetorical device of irony to secure and relish his superiority to his mistress.

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[51] According to Sharpe, cases of possession show "stereotyped patterns of behavior" (195). The "afflicted […] commonly vomited foreign bodies, most often pins, feathers and pieces of wood" (196).
[52] Sharpe 71.
[53] "more cursed" (3.4.7n).
[54] "I make" (3.4.16n).

6. Anagnorisis

The witchcraft Hodge purports to fear appears to be closely related to the power of the "suffocating maternal matrix"[55] against which he "must form his specifically masculine selfhood" according to the "[c]ulturally constructed" (7) assumptions of the period. As Janet Adelman formulates, "[c]ultural practice" in Tudor England "formalized" the need in a "boy-child" to leave the mother's "femaleness behind in order to become a man, enforcing the equation of masculine identity with differentiation from the mother." Importantly, the boy's "passage to manhood was marked," she adds, "by taking him out of the undifferentiated 'female' clothing of childhood," that is, by "'breeching' him" (7). The first step, therefore, in Hodge's maturation occurs when he realizes that he needs to be "breeched."

In the context of the Renaissance anxiety about the instability of gender distinctions, Hodge's awareness of his torn clothes also indicates his urge to determine his gendered identity. According to Stephen Orgel, Renaissance fantasy about gender roles included

> the conviction that men can turn into – or be turned into – women; or perhaps more exactly, can be turned *back* into women, losing the strength that enabled the male potential to be realized in the first place. In this version of the medical literature we all start as women, and the culture confirmed this by dressing all children in skirts until the age of seven or so, when the boy […] was "breeched," or put into pants, removed from the care of women, and began to be trained as a man.[56]

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[55] Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays,* Hamlet *to* The Tempest (New York, London: Routledge, 1992) 3.
[56] Stephen Orgel, *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 25.

The way Hodge comes of age in Gammer Gurton's household shows that his efforts to reach a confidence in his masculine identity, in appearance and discourse, also require the creation and exclusion of his other: the feminine, the maternal, the Catholic, the idolatrous, and the witch.

However, the theology and the jurisdiction in the early period of Protestantism in England did not encourage the belief in and the prosecution of witchcraft. Protestant theologians virtually withdrew from providing officially sanctioned, formal procedures to protect believers against the harm of witches. They "banned recourse to popular counter-magic," played down "the importance of guardian angels," and denied "the intercessionary powers of saints." At the same time, however, they placed "an unprecedented stress upon the reality of the Devil and the extent of his earthly dominion."[57] Thus, with a strong sense of the reality of witchcraft, and in the absence of a "legitimate form of protection," Thomas sums up, the victim, among a few other things, "could resort to prayer and supplication; he could search himself […]; he could reform himself and his household" (495). The Protestant clergy seems to leave the individual alone with his or her faith in the face of harmful magic. According to the Protestant position, the soul of a man "with Job-like faith […] would emerge strengthened by the encounter" (496). It appears that the Reformation forced individuals to learn how to manage without external support in the face of perceived danger to their souls and to turn inward for help.

This lack of established institutional procedures must have enlarged the scope of individual agency and put an emphasis on one's power to save one's own soul through "passive endurance"[58] and faith. More than thirty years after the appearance of the play, James I, who grouped together the practices of "*Magicians*, Diuines, Enchanters, Sorcerers, [and] Witches" on the grounds that they all "consult[…] with the Deuill,"[59] who is "their master" (47), still upheld the same claim. In

[57] Thomas 494.
[58] Thomas 496.
[59] James I 29.

Daemonologie he emphasized that "by the Deuils meanes, *can neuer the Deuill be casten out*." Therefore, the "only […] lawfull way, but likewise the most sure" (49) to cure "the disease that is caste on" by witchcraft, he declared, was "by earnest prayer to GOD [and] by amendement of their liues" (48). Hodge seems to follow this latter avenue actively.

In addition to the theological position, Thomas suggests that a process of secularization was taking place in the fight against witches, but this would only mean that people turned from one institution, the church, to another, that is, to the judicial power of the state. This in itself would not require a growing awareness of individual responsibility, and thus Thomas seems to overestimate the scope of a qualitative change in this direction. As he writes, since "[r]eligion offered no certain immunity" and "counter-magic was prohibited," "the legal prosecution of the witch became the only sure way out of what was otherwise a total *impasse*."[60] Once "[e]cclesiastical magic crumbled," he sums up, "society was forced to take legal action" (498). Thomas seems to base his conclusion on the assumption that "statutes against witchcraft were in operation between 1542 and 1572, and again between 1563 and 1736," although he admits that "[v]irtually nothing is known about prosecutions during the first of these periods" (449f), that is, at the putative time of the writing and first production of *Gammer Gurton's Needle*. James Sharpe, however, updates this information, adding that Henry VIII's 1542 statute "was not much used" and Edward VI repealed it in 1547. Therefore, "[f]rom 1547 until the Elizabethan statute of 1563," including the time when Mr. S. presumably wrote the play, "witchcraft was not a secular crime in England."[61] This means that Christians who felt that harmful magic imperiled the integrity of their souls could turn neither to the clergy nor to the law court for effective help.

[60] Thomas 497.
[61] Sharpe 29f.

While Hodge experiences an apotheosis in the last scene of the play, Diccon will be integrated into the community of the villagers,[62] which finally eliminates the hierarchical relationship between the two male characters. Hodge, who implicates Gammer Gurton indirectly in witchcraft, will be the putative participant in another one of Diccon's pranks when Dame Chat, believing it is he who crawled into her house at night, gives Doctor Rat a bad "turn" (4.3.41) instead. While Rat's "scalp is cloven to the brain" (5.1.26), as the curate grumbles, Hodge's head is, he proudly asserts, "neither scurvy[63] nor scald"[64] (5.2.102). To Gammer Gurton he admits, "chad been there, / Then chad been dressed, belike, as ill, by the mass, as the Gaffer Vicar" (194f). Instead, he is "meetly well sped already amongs[65]" (202), he says complacently, which gives him exceeding confidence in his own intelligence: "chad not had the better wit," he boasts, "chad been made a dolt" (203).

Only Diccon's wit can Hodge not surpass. Diccon "has more wits," Whitworth claims, "than anyone else except possibly master Bailey."[66] When Hodge insults the vagrant by calling him a "liar" and a "lickdish"[67] for not recovering the needle as he promised, Diccon retorts reminding Hodge of his cowardice: "you were that time beshitten / For fear of Hobgobling" (5.2.251f). However, in symmetry with Hodge's blasphemous oath of allegiance in Act two, scene one, Diccon now has to "kneel down" and "take an oath of Hodge's leather breech" to act as a friendly companion to "Master Doctor," to "Goodwife Chat," to Gammer Gurton, to her "great cat," and to Hodge (270–72, 276, 280, 283f).

In obeying master Bailey's order to the letter, Diccon gives Hodge "*a good blow on the buttock*" (5.2.290 SD), which makes the youth feel as if Diccon had, he says, "thrust me into the

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[62] Ardolino claims that the play's "setting is Girton, the small town just outside Cambridge" (19).
[63] "from *scurf*, an abnormal scaly condition of the scalp" (5.2.102n). ""
[64] "scabby" (5.2.102n).
[65] "all this while" (5.2.202).
[66] Whitworth xviii.
[67] "parasite" (5.2.250n).

buttock with a bodkin or a pin" (293). Hodge finds the needle in his breeches and exclaims, "Ich knew that ich must find it, else chould[68] a' had it never!" (311). This is a recognition, or anagnorisis, in Terence Cave's sense. As he explains, "'Ana-gnorisis', like 're-cognition', in fact implies a recovery of something once known rather than merely a shift from ignorance to knowledge."[69] The needle was not lost, after all, and still, it is recovered: "here in my hand be it!," Hodge calls out. With his "real," physical pain, the final scene of the play does away with multiple displacements, bursts the bubble of false consciousness, of accusations and fears of witchcraft, and restores perception to direct bodily sensation.

The "torch-lit hall at night" in "Christ's College,"[70] Cambridge, Whitworth says, "was dimly lit by modern standards," and, he adds, "[i]n a play in which seeking for a minuscule lost object is a major part of the action, it is not surprising for characters to speak of needing more light" (xxiv). "In a humanistic text," Whitworth concludes, "the darkness may also be metaphorical, with ignorant souls groping about blindly, believing any rumour that comes to their ears" (xxv). The actual darkness of the hall renders the stage darkness even more inescapable, and the metaphorical meaning of this darkness is in harmony with the complications of the action, the limitation and distortions of perception and with the false consciousness Diccon induces in Dame Chat and in Gammer Gurton. The end of confusion itself of what was mainly Diccon's "game" (5.2.318) appears as a cognitive gain when Hodge tells Gammer meaningfully to "Go near the light" (306).

7. Conclusion

Hodge, the protagonist of this comedy, surmounts a considerable obstacle in the way that leads him to the fulfillment of his desire. He endures delay and exhibits stamina. The search for a minuscule object yields an unintended, more significant result: the youth's identity unites in itself

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[68] [Whitworth] I should.
[69] Terence Cave, *Recognitions. A Study in Poetics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) 33.
[70] Whitworth xxiii.

the desire of his self with a powerful public image and a triumphant rhetoric. The early Tudor comedy of stamina and of the reward of coming into one's own seems to have inherited its optimism from the historic example of Henry VIII's success in defeating an enormous political resistance to marry the woman of his choice. In Hodge's case, the obstacle is a conglomerate of Catholic idolatry, imputed witchcraft, and maternal dominance, all of which is embodied in the figure of Gammer Gurton. Through a deceptive discourse, she can control Hodge's behavior and perception until the domestic servant himself takes action. From his action issues a new way of perceiving himself in the world, and this is followed, in turn, by his achievement of a superior rhetoric. The moment Hodge eventually lights upon the needle surprises the audience with the sudden end of a metaphoric "darkness" in the sense Whitworth uses the word.[71] After a spell of separation, the hero will be reunited with the social world of the play, a village community, in full possession and knowledge of who he is: a servant who has liberated himself to be married and to establish himself in the world.

[71] Whitworth xxv.

Chapter 2

The Prodigal and his Brother:

The Loss of Self in Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*

The oft quoted account of the events at Gray's Inn on December 28, 1594, emphasizes the "Tumult and Crowd upon the Stage" that "was able to disorder and confound any good Inventions whatsoever."[1] Since, according to the *Gesta Grayorum*, "there was no Opportunity to effect that which was intended," it comes as a surprise that, in spite of the "Throngs and Tumults," still "a Comedy of Errors (like to *Plautus* his *Menechmus*) was played by the Players" that night. What disturbed some of the guests and forced even the Ambassador of the Inner Temple to leave the room "discontended and displeased" even before the acting began, was, according to the chronicler, that "There came so great a number of worshipful Personages upon the Stage, that might not be displaced." The boundary between players and "Beholders" (22) obviously crumbled, so that a visitor was not able to distinguish between who belonged rightfully to the action and who took the place of players without having a legitimate reason to do so. The fact that, according to the text, the "grand Night" of "*Innocents-Day*" (20) "was ever afterwards called, *The Night of Errors*" (22) indicates that the memory of the first recorded performance of Shakespeare's early comedy blended in the participants' minds with the "Confusion and Errors" (22) of the rest of the evening. One reason why it might have been so is that the theme of *The Comedy of Errors* itself is the confusion of identities:[2] the Syracusan traveler's diffuse self intrudes upon the more clearly delineated public persona of his brother in Ephesus.

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[1] *Gesta Grayorum* (1688) 22. *Early English Books Online* 16 June 2014.
[2] Thomas Whitfield Baldwin calls it "a play of mistaken identities." *Shakspere's Five-Act Structure: Shakespeare's Early Plays on the Background of Renaissance Theories of Five-Act Structure from 1470* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1947) 665.

As far as the question of identity is concerned, the outcome of Shakespeare's comedy takes a step away from the optimism *Gammer Gurton's Needle* represented: Antipholus of Syracuse does not reach a full-blown sense of who he is through rhetoric and the literal fashioning of his appearance. Compared to the level of integrity Hodge reaches when he emerges from a submission of his sensations to Gammer's domestic authority, Antipholus of Syracuse's sense of identity remains incomplete. Throughout the action, he seems to protect himself against the realization that he has reached his destination and found the place where he can meet his lost brother. As I will argue, he has reason to fear that the power of his Ephesian brother's public persona, which is well integrated in the social, economic, and legal system of the city, might overwhelm his weak sense of self that lacks such outside support. Thus, the two brothers represent complementary halves of a fragmented identity, and the intention of the traveler brother, who lives under a false name, to reunite with his Ephesian counterpart does not yield the desired result: instead of gaining a sense of identity, he loses himself among the accoutrements and trappings of a life, the life of Antipholus of Ephesus, that remain alien to him. To use Jonathan Dollimore's word, as a subject, the Syracusan brother remains "decentered,"[3] while his brother exhibits traits of the inner emptiness of a well-established citizen.

1. Providentialism versus Crisis in the Criticism

The way the denouement sorts out the confusion gave rise to two important trends in the criticism: one emphasizes the play's Italian origins and the Plautine aspects of its structure, while the other focuses more on the references to St. Paul's Ephesus and traces the theme of Christian providence back to the medieval English dramatic tradition. The first approach pays more attention to the mechanical aspects of the plot and is skeptical of the chances of characters to reach personal

[3] Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004) 153–181.

fulfillment and inwardness, while the other produces optimistic interpretations about the final reunion and renewal of a family. This analysis of the play takes a closer look at the way the Syracusan brother conceptualizes his own identity, and it argues that he avoids meeting his Ephesian counterpart and thus effectively defers the unavoidable conclusion, which might otherwise take place in the second scene of the first Act, until the fifth Act. I seek to find an answer to the question of what might motivate the Syracusan visitor to Ephesus, who has been searching for his lost twin for five years, to suppress his own realization throughout the entire plot that he has reached his destination.

Both critical traditions provide incentives to pursue such an inquiry. In contrast to the writer of the *Gesta Grayorum*, Charles Gildon, "author of the first extended critical commentary on all of the works of Shakespeare,"[4] emphasizes the regularity in the comedy as far as it observes the three Aristotelian unities, and he praises Shakespeare's improvement on Plautus in adding "two Servants as like as their Masters"[5] to the dramatis personae. He thinks the action focuses on "the finding [of] the lost Brother" and deems "the *Catastrophe* very happy and strongly moving" (299).[6] George Steevens complains about the "intricacy of plot" which, he believes, outweighs the "distinction of character" in the play.[7] When he argues that the play does not engage our attention strongly "because we can guess in great measure how the denouement will be brought about,"[8] he seems to suggest, as Gildon did six decades earlier, that the play is about one brother finding the other, which is indeed a constant possibility beginning in Act 1, scene 2, when the Ephesian Dromio surprises in the street the Syracusan master at a moment when his own slave would be unlikely to

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[4] Robert S. Miola, "The Play and the Critics," *The Comedy of Errors: Critical Essays*, ed. Robert S. Miola (New York and London: Garland, 1997) 3–51. 4.
[5] Charles Gildon, *Remarks on the Plays of Shakespear: An Essay on the Art, Rise, and Progress of the Stage* (London, 1710) 300, qtd. in Brian Vickers, ed., *William Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, vol. 2, 1693–1733 (Abingdon, Great Britain; New York: Routledge, 1974) 240.
[6] Vickers 240.
[7] George Steevens, ed., *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, 10 vols. (London, 1773) VII. 316.3, qtd. in Arthur Sherbo, *The Achievement of George Steevens* (New York: Peter Lang, 1990) 78.
[8] Sherbo 78.

appear. Charlotte Lennox also objects to the excessive prominence of structure in the play, claiming that the manner of the separation of the brothers at sea, which is necessary "to create the incidents" of the plot, is "very curiously contrived by Shakespeare."[9] The "studied and forced arrangement" is inferior to Plautus, she argues, but the consequent "increase of business" in Shakespeare is more entertaining (284), she concludes. All three eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century critics notice the power of the plot as a grand mechanism moving inexorably toward a predictable end and somewhat limiting the freedom of choices characters can make in the process. None of them reflects, however, on the question of how the denouement will be deferred or whether the fact that the Syracusan brother gives up searching for his twin as soon as he receives signs of his presence in Ephesus has something to do with his character.

Thomas Whitfield Baldwin's mid-twentieth century study of Plautus' influences on *The Comedy of Errors* through *Amphitruo* and *Menaechmi*[10] has to be mentioned for its monumentality[11] and its relentless search for Shakespeare's sources (7), while Cornelia C. Coulter places all the explicit elements of the plot, "the confusion resulting from the likeness between twin brothers,"[12] "the restoration of a long-lost son or daughter" (76), and the problem and "means of identification" (77) in the Greek and Roman dramatic tradition. However, Erma Gill is the first scholar who determines to engage with the characters of the play. She still criticizes Shakespeare, like Steevens and Lennox did, for having "the plot overshadow[…] the characters in interest,"[13] but she admits that his characters are "more fully developed than those" of Plautus in *Menaechmi*. She emphasizes Antipholus of Ephesus' social position: he is "a business man of sound reputation and a social favorite" (83). His brother, she remarks, is "mistaken for him" and is, as a consequence, "offered

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[9] Charlotte Lennox, *Shakespeare Illustrated*, 3 vols., vol. 1 (Philadelphia, PA: Bradford & Inskeep, 1809) 284.
[10] Thomas Whitfield Baldwin, *Shakspere's Five-Act Structure* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1947).
[11] Miola 6.
[12] "The Plautine Tradition in Shakespeare." *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 19 (1920): 66–83. 74.
[13] Erma Gill, "A Comparison of the Characters In 'The Comedy of Errors' with those in the 'Menaechmi.'" *Studies in English* 5 (October 1925): 79–95. 95.

credit, is affectionately greeted, is given invitations and thanked for kindnesses" (83). She even refers to the Syracusan's own words at the opening of the third scene of the fourth Act summing up this experience, but she still does not ask, as a student of character probably should, what prevents a traveler in search of his twin from drawing the obvious conclusion from this experience, namely, that he is "mistaken for him." Still, she thinks Antipholus of Syracuse is the more serious of the two brothers: Shakespeare has added "morality, and something of sentimentality" to his character, "so that he is a contrast to his impulsive, quick-tempered, and none too moral brother" (85). Gill attempts to see the brothers in comparison, "one character as a foil for another," as she says (86); however, she does not raise the question if the Syracusan brother's sudden loss of determination upon his arrival in Ephesus, after trying to trace his twin for five years, is merely a plot contrivance or has something to do with his character, the character of his brother, or the relationship between the two of them.

In contrast to Madeleine Doran, who claims that *The Comedy of Errors* could not pose any trouble to Shakespeare in fitting character into the "pattern of romantic story," since in this play "character is slight,"[14] Northop Frye has a more sophisticated approach to the function of characters in a seemingly rigid plot design. He conceptualizes the structure of the play as "a metamorphosis structure, a descent into illusion and an emergence into recognition."[15] Most importantly, he sees the "main action" taking place "in a world of illusion and assumed madness" (107). On the one hand, Frye might be referring here to the insanity of the Ephesian brother in the fourth Act as partly a matter of the Courtesan's, Adriana's, and Luciana's perception and partly feigned. When his wife orders him to be "safe conveyed / Home to my house," his slave tellingly urges him, exclaiming,

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[14] *Endeavors of Art: A Study of Form in Elizabethan Drama* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1964) 325.
[15] Northop Frye, *A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1965) 106f.

"Will you be bound for nothing? Be mad, good master: cry, 'The devil!'"[16] On the other hand, however, Frye seems to encourage us to see Antipholus of Syracuse's curious inability or reluctance, from Act 1, scene 2 on, to comprehend that his brother must be near him in Ephesus as a less overt aspect of the same temporary and self-imposed "illusion" or "assumed madness."

As an example of combining a perspicacious approach to the problem of the perception of identity, already present in Plautus, with Christian providentialism, Joel B. Altman describes the typical self-delusion in which dramatic characters often find themselves and even names the conceptual trap that holds Antipholus of Syracuse's perception captive. Although the aspect that is available to characters within a dramatic world is necessarily limited, they are forced to make "conjectures […] about their situations in the light of [such] imperfect knowledge [to] construct a reasonable world for themselves."[17] These "conjectures" in *The Comedy of Errors* arise, Altman formulates succinctly, "from the single presupposition that there can be only one Antipholus and one Dromio in Ephesus" (165). To be more precise, this presupposition affects the Syracusan traveler most curiously, since he is the only character who has access to evidence to the contrary: he remarks that "I could not speak with Dromio since at first / I sent him from the mart" (2.2.6). Nonetheless, he still withholds this knowledge from himself, so to speak. Thus, from his perspective we might reformulate the above premise saying that "there *should* be only one Antipholus and one Dromio in Ephesus." Although, in terms of dramatic irony, the audience can afford what the Syracusan cannot allow to happen, namely to realize that this is not the case, for some reason we still accept his persistent, sometimes even violent, avoidance of the fact and find it amusing. Altman assigns what he terms an "instinctual insularity" as a "recognizable character trait" (167) to the Syracusan brother and extends it even to his Pauline definition of the human condition, that is, "the

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[16] Shakespeare, *The Comedy of Errors*, ed. Frances E. Dolan, The Pelican Shakespeare Ser. (New York: Penguin, 1999) 4.4.123f, 128f. All references are to this edition unless otherwise noted.
[17] Joel B. Altman, *The Tudor Play of Mind: Rhetorical Inquiry and the Development of Elizabethan Drama* (Berkeley: Universtiy of California Press, 1978) 165.

final inability of human wit to extricate itself from the condition of mystery in which it is implicated, and its need for some transcendent power to reveal the truth" (173). To crack the ideological bias in this interpretation and to avoid looking only "inward," not "outward" (171), as Ephesians do, according to Altman, we have to ask why the Syracusan traveler imposes this limitation on himself in the first place.

Instead of the deferral of the denouement that would result from the traveler Antipholus' perceptual conundrum, Arthur F. Kinney emphasizes the way "the force of fate or providence"[18] drives the plot toward its conclusion. He finds that the idea of "*reunion* […] in a new life" (37, 39), central to the sixth chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, defined the meaning of the play to Elizabethans, and that this relates the play more to the native medieval tradition of the mystery cycles (42) than to "secular influences" (40). The Syracusan brother, Kinney argues, consistently defies worldly temptations (44, 47) to make the Pauline philosophy he shares with his father (39) come true. The reunion does indeed take place, but it is more the product of an increasingly mechanistic plot device, namely the accelerating speed of the alternate appearances of the twins in the fourth Act, like two pictures taking shorter and shorter turns in front of the eye until they finally blend, than the result of a conscious search on the part of the Syracusan traveler.

In contrast to Kinney's native English and providentialist approach, Jonathan Hall explains Shakespeare's treatment of the crisis of identity through comparison with its model in Plautus' *Menaechmi*. He identifies the origin of the ambiguity in the Syracusan brother's behavior in the self-defeating nature of his mission: by separating him from his mother and "his mirror image" in his twin, the sea storm "has constituted him as a desiring subject."[19] Consequently, his search aims at "his own annihilation as separate individual" (47). Hall illustrates the paradox with the

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[18] Arthur F. Kinney, "Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* and the Nature of Kinds," *Studies in Philology* 85 (Winter, 1988): 29–52. 33.
[19] Jonathan Hall, *Anxious Pleasures: Shakespearean Comedy and the Nation-State* (Madison and Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London: Associated University Press, 1995) 47.

contradictory meanings of the metaphor of the dissolution of the self in the maternal element of water: Adriana presents it to him as "completion," while he himself experiences it as "the loss of isolated selfhood" (48). The Syracusan traveler's "quest," Hall writes, "is already aimed at a loss of selfhood, although at the same time that loss is what he fears" (48f). Hall sums up his own main argument by saying that in *The Comedy of Errors*, Shakespeare "reexplores the ancient topos of the loss of the self within a newly 'monetarized' world" (41). Antipholus of Ephesus represents a "socially guaranteed identity" that functions in his mercantile world as "credit." This "precarious identity," however, will be "disrupted" with the appearance of the alien other with the same name (42). Hall calls attention to the contradiction inherent in the Syracusan brother's character, but his theory explains the Ephesian twin's alienation through the "monetarization" (43) of identity in the mercantile circulation of goods, on the one hand, and the contradictory impulses in his Syracusan brother originating in the peculiar constitution of his self in a loss (47f), on the other, as two independent phenomena. To work out a satisfactory explanation for the motivation in the traveler twin, we need to reconstruct the way he perceives his identity in the context of that of his Ephesian counterpart.

2. Naming and Fatherhood

In his first words, Solinus, Duke of Ephesus, sets up a rich and tension-filled opposition between the living bodies of men and a relentless monetary and legal system. Although this opposition, I will argue, accounts for the "suffering, deprivation, and uncertainty" which, in turn, give rise to the "anxieties" that the play, according to Frances E. Dolan, "robustly explores,"[20] Duke Solinus presents the convertibility of the value of sentient beings into money and the terms of law

[20] Frances E. Dolan, "Introduction," *The Comedy of Errors*, by William Shakespeare, ed. Frances E. Dolan, The Pelican Shakespeare Ser. (New York: Penguin Books, 1999) xxxi–xli. xxxi.

as a matter of political reality.[21] Ephesian merchants who lacked "guilders to redeem their lives," the duke claims to justify his own cruelty, had to seal the "rigorous statutes" of the Syracusan duke which banned them from trading there under the penalty of death "with their bloods" (1.1.8f). Syracuse seems to sacrifice Ephesians to the powerful abstraction of state legislation. Duke Solinus condemns the bloody practices of his Syracusan counterpart and thus elevates the antagonism between Ephesus and Syracuse to the level of governmental ideology.

The symmetry between Ephesus and Syracuse eliminates a sense of history and supplants the freedom and responsibility of decisions by foregrounding the absurdity of synchronized actions. As the duke explains the inexorable evolution of conditions in parity, "It hath in solemn synods been decreed, / Both by the Syracusians and ourselves, / To admit no traffic to our adverse towns" (1.1.15). The two states exist in a sense of timelessness,[22] and they do not justify their policies by referring to the inherent logic of their history. Instead, they imitate compulsively the outward gestures of their mirror image. By imitating each other, they form empty and meaningless structures which are blind to their own internal mechanisms and insensitive to the waste of the human life that they require to maintain them.[23] The concept of State as an ideal in political humanism emerged around the turn of the thirteenth century with recourse to the Aristotelian

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[21] This is the first reference in the play to the sacrifice and transformation of human life into an abstract monetary or juridical system. Baldwin claims that Thomas Cranmer often called transubstantiation "juggling" and that he thought of *Jack Juggler* in C. M. Gayley's terms of a "dramatic attack upon transubstantiation" (669).

[22] For Dolan, "Ephesus seems, in some ways, outside time and place" (xxxv).

[23] Prompted by the experience of a Shakespeare conference in Moscow in 1987, Jonathan Dollimore reflects on scholarly clichés about the alleged power of literature to "transcend[…] the merely political" and comments on his own indoctrination saying, "western cold-war propaganda displaced on to the USSR a political identity which it shared with it, not least in its use of such rhetoric to 'persuade' populations in the West to line up behind their own governments for protection against the Russian threat." Half a year later, Dollimore visited the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington and experienced, as he says, "a certain symmetry." The political context Shakespeare creates for the evolution of the Syracusan brother's identity compels us to respond to Dollimore's question if Shakespeare could "figure in such a strategy" of war propaganda with "yes." Jonathan Dollimore, "Introduction to the Second Edition," *Radical Tragedy*: *Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004) xli–xcix. lxxix, lxxxi.

ideas about active participation in public life.[24] The legalism in Solinus' speech exemplifies this elevation of "the actual physical boundaries" of the territory of a kingdom to the abstract "boundaries of the enforceable law." Territory in *The Comedy of Errors* acquires an independent "juristic personality" (119). Following from the experience of regional differences in Italy, Marsilius of Padua, a follower of Aristotle (124), abandoned the ideal of an "absolutist universality" of law and accepted the "relativity of institutions and constitutions" (125). From the fourteenth century onward, Ullmann writes, academic jurists discussed questions of citizenship in the *Consilia* (expert opinions), for example of "how far a citizen of one State was subjected to the laws of another" (136). However, both Solinus and his Syracusan counterpart seem to be determined to enforce their respective legislations to an absolute degree.

Although Solinus pronounces a sentence over Egeon in the name of this absurd legislation in an abstract political system which not even he can control, Egeon's seeming compliance in offering his life takes place on a different plane. "I am not partial to infringe our laws" (1.1.4), the duke washes his hands, and tells Egeon in the passive voice that "by law, thou art condemned to die" (25). In contrast, Egeon carries the burden of a whole life on his shoulders and has a lived history to tell, which he opposes conspicuously to the force of impersonal state legislation, to lend his death the status of the heroic "fall" of an innocent. By indicating that Solinus has the means to "procure" (1) that is, to "contrive or devise" and thus to "bring […] upon"[25] him his "fall" (1.1.1) with some implied effort and force, he elevates his own stature above the state, as the embodiment of some intrinsic value that the state is about to take pains to destroy.

To magnify the value of his lived experience in the context of a dehumanized state, Egeon locates his "griefs" outside the discourse of power, as "unspeakable" (1.1.32), and associates his

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[24] Walter Ullmann, *Medieval Foundations of Renaissance Humanism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977) 118.
[25] "Procure," *Oxford English Dictionary*, ed. Judy Pearsall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) 21 May 2014.

own conduct with the forces of "nature" (34). He claims never to have made arbitrary decisions but to have followed the often contradictory calls of the "kind embracements of my spouse" (43), the death of his "factor" (41) in business, and the "pleasing punishment" (46) of pregnancy that befell his wife. His act of adding to the perceptual enigma of having indistinguishable twins by buying another pair of the same age was also dictated partly by circumstance and partly by his fatherly care: the parents of the latter "were exceeding poor," but they could "attend my sons" (56f). His wife then egged him on to embark on the portentous journey from Epidamnum home to Syracuse, and the rest was the making of "Fortune" (105) in the form of the "wind-obeying deep" (63), the "stream" (86) of the Mediterranean, and of "a mighty rock" (101).

Egeon has lived his life in the shadow of death, beckoning and luring him with the "comfort" (1.1.26) of a relief from "woes" (2) and "griefs" (32). He "would gladly have embraced" an "immediate death" (69, 68) twenty-five years ago in shipwreck, if it hadn't been for "the incessant weepings of my wife" and the "piteous plainings of the pretty babes" (70, 72). Onboard the sinking ship, with "not […] much hope" (65) left for survival, he let the sailors, whose duty it should have been to protect the passengers, take the only lifeboat and desert the family (76f). Still, the "merciless" (99) gods did not grant him the longed-for end, adding more "misfortunes" and "mishaps" about which to tell more "sad stories" (119f) now and thus to further prolong his life.

The rest of Egeon's story offers a subtle but significant change in his attitude toward life and in his sense of responsibility. While he first blamed the loss of the son he raised,[26] together with that of his slave, on the will of that son, to which he merely acquiesced, he unexpectedly emerges in his own narrative as an agent. This son, he begins, "importuned me" (1.1.126) that he might set sail with his slave in quest of his twin brother. But then, in contrast to the passive voice that dominates his narrative, Egeon puts himself in an active structure as the subject of independent emotion and

[26] First he says he is "the other" than "the latter-born" (82, 78), i.e., his first-born, but then he calls him "My youngest boy" (124).

action. “I labored of a love to see” the absent son, he admits, and, for the sake of this longing, he adds, “I hazarded the loss of whom I loved” (130f). This is the first moment we experience the stirring of heartfelt emotion in Egeon toward members of his own family. In the vague hope of recovering one, he might have lost both of his sons. Suddenly, in the poignant risk of all or nothing, a personal attachment toward the two young men seems to have emerged, the distinction between whom he himself was previously intent on obscuring. A few lines above this, he reported the loss of their unique names, the only key to their identity (“the one so like the other / As could not be distinguished but by names,” 51f), in a half-suppressed remark, as if it was the matter of an accident: his remaining son’s case, he formulates in a conspicuous evasion, was like that of the remaining slave: “Reft of his brother, but retained his name” (128). Egeon here suppresses his own role in the act of depriving his son of his identity, and he tries to disguise his decision as a deed of Fortune.[27] However, when not the elements, but he himself, became the cause of a hazard either to regain the missing members of his family or to lose the last remaining ones, he seems to have entered his own story for the first time. At this moment, he took the place of those forces he had himself experienced previously as being helplessly exposed to, and this changed his viewpoint.

The result of this change is palpable not only in the appearance of the active voice with Egeon in the first person in his narrative but also in the action he initiated next in the life story he is relating to Solinus. He went to extreme lengths in an effort to reunite the family he had previously perceived as a force on the same level as natural disasters, and a constraint that kept him from his wished-for liberation in death. “Five summers have I spent,” he explains, “in farthest Greece, / Roaming clean through the bounds of Asia” (1.1.132f). In the course of the search, his wish to free himself, through dying, from the burden of having a family has transformed into the “happy”

[27] Lennox remarks that Shakespeare does not assign a reason for the change of names, while in Plautus “the grandfather, on losing the eldest boy, transferred his name to the youngest, in order to preserve the remembrance of him, which very naturally accounts for two brothers having the same name” (284).

acceptance of a "timely death," in case his journey had granted him the certainty that "they live" (138f).

Egeon developed a narcissistic self-pity vis-à-vis the forces of nature and the responsibility his family imposed on him, and finally he has transferred its cause to the uncontrollable and absurd political constellation of the twin cities Syracuse and Ephesus. To the power of this construct he now offers a life that has ever missed its point in the empty hull of family relations and then sought for it in vain for years in a willingly undertaken and desperate voyage "Roaming" (133) across the Mediterranean.[28] Solinus justifies the blame Egeon puts on his regime by exhibiting a split consciousness. While he is aware that his "honor" and "dignity" are bound up with "our laws," "my crown," "my oath," and the unalterable finality of a "passèd sentence" (148, 143, 142f, 147), at the peril of what he calls a "great disparagement," he withdraws the commitment of his "soul" from the unreasonable reason of state and places it with Egeon's "favor" (148, 145, 149). To do so, however, he only needs to offer a day's extension, the running time of the action, on an existing legal provision which ensures that human life is convertible into money: "Beg thou, or borrow, to make up the sum [of "a thousand marks[']" ransom], / And live; if no, then thou art doomed to die" (153f, 21). The first scene leaves the questions open of what value will finally redeem Egeon's life and to what extent a recovery of lost identities can counter the techniques of the "avoidance of love" in alienation in the state and in Egeon's family.

While Egeon has entered the play in consciousness of his history and presented himself to Solinus with a full identity that includes his sin, his tellingly suppressed guilt, and his futile efforts of recovery, his sons' identities seem curiously mutilated and inauthentic. In their lives, Egeon's lighthearted and irresponsible experimentation with "hap" (38), his helpless drift along a naturally-seeming current of events, and his late awakening from adventure turn into deliberate calculation,

[28] The adventure at sea leading ultimately to an unexpected reunion is one of the "various similarities" Dolan mentions that connect the early *The Comedy of Errors* to the late romance *Pericles* (xxxiii).

cautious planning, and forced dissimulation. In the first scene, Egeon's life confronts the relentless murderous power of the state and barely escapes destruction; the middle part of the play, however, shows two Antipholuses and two Dromios who are, willy-nilly, members of the state and have to speak and behave so that they don't risk their position in it. Egeon's perception of who he has become as a result of his lived experience determines his precarious situation in opposition to the state; the Antipholuses' sensitive position in the state, in contrast, produces what they perceive to be their own identity.

Egeon has overwritten his Syracusan son's identity with a name that stands for another character living at a location unknown to them. Since his name, now lost, was his only distinguishing feature according to Egeon (1.1.52), the Syracusan son has no other way to assume a socially verifiable persona than by finding that location and filling in for the character whose name he bears. He only needs to have a liquid self that takes whatever shape he pours it in. This predicament binds him to his slave of a similarly damaged identity—whose "case was like, / Reft of his brother, but retained his name" (1.1.127f)—with an invisible tie of a potential solidarity: both the Syracusan son and his slave can establish themselves in the world only as substitutes. In their every gesture they point to somebody who they are not, but this depersonalizing dependence on a double does not establish a common foundation, a subculture of the nameless, so to speak, on which their actual identity could evolve. This is a play where hierarchical relationships bear more potential of meaningful human content than the solidarity between characters and political entities that are affixed by illusory threads to their counterparts in an imaginary mirror.

Nonetheless, once they had left their home and Egeon behind, the Syracusan son and his slave embarked on a voyage with their compass oriented toward the magnetic field of their Ephesian counterparts, eventually to enter the city, which does not hold a promise of redemption from their shared conundrum but rather locks them in an elusive sense of inauthenticity in a social system they do not understand. How does this experience influence the brothers' and their slaves'

perception of who they are? To what extent are they able to find relief from the social pressure on their identities in solidarity across the hierarchical boundary between master and slave? Do marriage and sexuality provide an escape from their alienation? These are the questions this analysis of the perception of identity in *The Comedy of Errors* will attempt to answers.

In an effort to elude the annihilating paternal control over who he is, the Syracusan son eagerly enters a larger community and embraces whatever identity it offers him. Dolan sums up the phenomenon in general terms: "the choice to submit to rather than indignantly resist counterfeits, games, and illusions usually distinguishes the survivors and winners from the losers in Shakespeare's comic worlds."[29] However, the Syracusan son's willingness to go "at all adventures" (2.2.215) does not result from a mere spirit of taking chances to prevail. Rather than to be a "winner" in the play, to be recognized at all in his dramatic world as a character, he must leave his father's home and put on the mask "his" name has predetermined for him and fill in the empty space inside the "real" Antipholus, who, in turn, emerges as a puppet with no freedom to shape his role in the democratic mercantile world of Ephesus. The kind of personal history and a self, authentic in spite (or because?) of its internal contradictions, as we saw it in Egeon, hardly has a chance to evolve in the middle part of the play.

3. Antipholus of Syracuse: Losing His Self

While Egeon enters the stage as a speaking character, his Syracusan son appears first as a listener. The Merchant advises him to lie about his origin: "give out you are of Epidamnum" (1.2.1), he says, because as a Syracusan he is entering a forbidden territory in Ephesus. When he receives the money he deposited with the Merchant, Antipholus of Syracuse has had to resign silently his claim on the first eighteen years of his life. What remains is the past (at least) five years he spent

[29] Dolan xxxvii.

sailing across the Mediterranean in search of the legitimate bearer of the name he is forced to usurp, while the man who christened him twice (or rather un-christened him the second time, when he divested him of his real name) was likewise "Roaming" (1.1.133), trying to catch up with him and with the first Antipholus. Apart from having cash to rent a room in the Centaur and to buy dinner, the nameless son is now homeless as well.

The way the Syracusan formulates his plan to make acquaintance with Ephesus expresses his status in it: "I will go lose myself," he says to the Merchant, "And wander up and down to view the city" (1.2.30f). Ephesus is a place where, he knows, he "cannot get" his "own content" (34, 33), but where he may lend himself as the "content" of another identity that might be well integrated into the commercial and legal systems of Ephesus but that may never become his own. Antipholus of Syracuse is remarkably conscious of his own malleability and openness to impressions when he compares his being in the world to that of

> a drop of water
> That in the ocean seeks another drop,
> Who falling there to find his fellow forth,
> Unseen, inquisitive, confounds himself. (35–38)

He sums up his chances of finding his own identity through meeting those he, as an infant, lost at sea adding, "So I, to find a mother and a brother, / In quest of them, unhappy, lose myself" (39f). The Syracusan brother enters a world knowing that he will not be able to act out his own character in it.

The first opportunity to impersonate the "real" Antipholus meets the Syracusan brother in the form of a pleasing invitation addressed to his stomach, but he responds to it by calling to account the Ephesian Dromio, who lures him with the prospect of a savory "dinner" (1.2.89), about the whereabouts of his cash. We would think that this Dromio sufficiently indicates to Antipholus of Syracuse that he serves a different master, not him, but somehow we still accept that the traveler fails to draw the obvious conclusion: he has finally arrived at his destination and, in the Ephesian

Dromio, found the lead that could guide him to the brother "After" whom he "became inquisitive" (1.1.126, 125) more than five years earlier. But is he prepared to encounter himself in the eyes of his other who has apparently established himself successfully in the world? His twin apparently has a "wife" (1.2.88), whom *this* Dromio respects as his "mistress" (46) and who expects her husband, when the "clock" strikes "twelve upon the bell" (45), at "home to dinner" (89) with a "capon" burning and a pig falling "from the spit" (44). This Dromio has named the address of the brother's "house" as "the Phoenix" (75) that clearly does not sound like "the Centaur" (9), where the Syracusan sent his slave a short while ago and from where, as he himself admits, his own Dromio is unlikely to have "returned so soon" (42). Is Antipholus of Syracuse ready to follow Dromio of Ephesus to the Phoenix and wait for his brother's arrival there? How would he introduce himself to his Ephesian borther? What name would he say? How is he going to explain who he is without disparaging their father, who un-"distinguished" (1.1.52) him? How will he compare to his brother, whom their father "labored of a love to see" (130) and whose value he acknowledged as superior to his own by hazarding "the loss" (131) of him whom he never had to miss?[30]

To emulate his Ephesian counterpart, the Syracusan son decided to do deliberately that which elevated his brother in their father's eyes by accident: to fall in the ocean "like a drop of water" and "lose" himself (1.2.35, 40). Thus, his desire to find "a mother and a brother" (39) might be only an excuse to act out a covert wish and to be "carried" away from his father "before the wind" (1.1.109), sail eastward, as it happened to them almost eighteen years ago, and, perhaps, to show Egeon the way to follow him and eventually find them all in "Corinth, as we thought" (111), or somewhere in that direction, wherever they might have landed. If he can catch up with his brother before Egeon arrives there, the Syracusan brother might entice his father to act out a romance

[30] In Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, Bassanio convinces Antonio to lend him more money to recover the amount he previously borrowed from Antonio and squandered. When I was a schoolboy, he explains, and lost an arrow, I shot another one after it, and by hazarding both I often found them. Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Norton Shakespeare*. *Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York, London: W W Norton, 1997) 1090–1144. 1.1.140–4.

version of Luke's Prodigal Son story with a special twist that could restore the Syracusan son to the status he used to have in the family when his mother and brother were still with them. While the prodigal son has become "dead"[31] to his father, Egeon has been "sever'd from [his] bliss" (1.1.118) when he lost Antipholus. However, like the prodigal son, with a little help, Antipholus may also come "aliue againe"[32] for his father. Only the father has to find the son, not the way it happens in Luke. If he can make this happen, the Syracusan son will do better than the elder brother of the prodigal son who is "euer with" his father[33] and is thus never seen, never praised. Instead, he will lead the way to the reunion, and his father might eventually recognize him as the cause behind the joyful outcome, hiding in the shadow of Antipholus, as his father seems to have wished, but holding such a place, Antipholus' place in Ephesus, as is worthy of a man who can animate a social persona. Thus, the Syracusan son would give his father reason to "make mery, & be glad" (15:31) for his own sake, not only for that of the brother who left him, and thus he would have his father rewrite the Biblical parable and authorize a version he has invented and made happen.

The success of the Syracusan son's plan depends, on the one hand, on awakening the fatherly instinct in Egeon and having him act upon it; on the other hand, even the most benign intention of guiding other characters and connecting them through their hidden desire and their love cannot become operative in the rigid political conditions of Ephesus without being anchored in an explicit social function, and embedded in the commercial or legal system of exchanges. Not known to his son, the old man has now testified as to his commitment to the family in undertaking a five-year-long voyage as a penance and leaving not even Ephesus, the forbidden city, "unsought" (1.1.135), as we learned from his remorseful confession to Solinus, thus risking his life. What remains for the Syracusan son to do, as a result, is to act as the conscience, the human core, the

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[31] William Whittingham, *The Bible and Holy Scriptures Conteyned in the Olde and Newe Testament* (Geneva: Rouland Hall, 1560) Luke 15:31. *Early English Books Online*. June 19 2014.
[32] Luke 15:31.
[33] Luke 15:31.

feeling self behind the public persona of the Antipholus who bears the name, the fixed position in the mercantile world, and who has credit for financial and legal transactions, that is, everything the Syracusan does not. If they met in person, everything that would distinguish between them as mirror images of each other would detract from the Syracusan's value in the eyes of the world. Therefore, he must remain unseen until Egeon arrives, he who took away his persona and is therefore the only character who can give it back to him.

If the Syracusan son can hide behind Antipholus' public image, they could complement each other and together form a whole that might even please their father who condemned the boy growing up beside him to be socially invisible. Moreover, this manner of a union between the twins would even surpass Egeon's expectations, transcend his simplistic attempt to do away with the confusion by actually augmenting it, and prove the worth of a son who makes a virtue of necessity and remains in the background. Such a possibility might prevent the Syracusan from an understanding of what should be obvious. Is he capable of realizing such a dream? Or will he disappear behind his brother's public image without earning credit for his merit in reuniting the family? What will happen to this unique human identity in the reunion?

Instead of acknowledging that the Ephesian Dromio is not his slave, he hangs on to a detail that connects him, by association, to the impersonal circulation of money and its power to redeem life in Ephesus. He demands of the Ephesian Dromio the gold he gave his slave with a remarkable persistence: he asks for it six times (1.2.54, 59, 70, 73, 78, 81) and deals him some blows for emphasis, although he called his own slave a "trusty villain" (19) earlier in the same scene. The value of the money in question, a "thousand marks" (81), equals that of the ransom for a merchant's life in Ephesus (1.1.21). This is the first sign to indicate that the Syracusan traveler is gradually and almost imperceptibly becoming entangled in the mercantile system of exchange in Ephesus that converts even life into cash.

To avoid recognizing a detail below the visible surface of appearances, the traveler extends the mystery to the whole city and discredits everything in it that is not immediately seen with the naked eye. In a "town […] full of cozenage" (1.2.97) even the slave he grew up with may have "o'er-raught of all my money" (96), he speculates and removes the epithet "trusty" to call him a mere "villain" (1.2.96). Antipholus of Syracuse seems to be changing sides: now he worries only about the verifiable presence of his money like a merchant and suspects harmful magic behind the visible surface everywhere: he imagines Ephesus to be full of

> …nimble jugglers that deceive the eye,
> Dark-working sorcerers that change the mind,
> Soul-killing witches that deform the body,
> Disguisèd cheaters, prating mountebanks,
> And many suchlike liberties of sin (1.2.98–102).

The unfounded idea of a network of conspiracy diverts attention in a paranoid explanation from a single fact that must not yet count as valid. Considering the assumption that he is now in a world of altered physical conditions that might have already affected his "mind" and "body," the Syracusan needs to find an excuse to stay: and that is to make sure his money is "safe" (105). The non-existent magic protects him from believing his brother is near; and securing the cash, a truly Ephesian, mercantile concern, provides the excuse to endure and withstand the magic and to stay where his brother is likely to live.

Although he suspects he must have beaten another Dromio at the mart in Ephesus, the Syracusan son carries on with his compulsive effort to unify the images of the two slaves in his perception. He did not even check the Phoenix, where *that* Dromio said he lived, so that he can maintain his belief that the two slaves are actually one. He found his gold "laid up / Safe at the Centaur," and through his own "computation" and his "host's report" he now realizes that "I could not speak with Dromio since at first / I sent him from the mart" (2.2.1f, 4–6). So, he must have

spoken to somebody else. And yet, when his own Dromio confirms this (15f), he beats him for it "again." Upon the slave's question "what bargain" (25) lies behind the beating, the Syracusan explains to him the difference between the time when he uses him "for my fool" and chats with him "familiarly," on the one hand, and his more "serious hours" (27, 26, 29), on the other. His slave should follow the changes in the expression of his master's face like "gnats" do follow the sun: "make sport" when it shines, but "creep in crannies when he hides his beams" (30f). The theory of eyebeams[34] validates the master's claim on the power of his eyes, not only to sense, but to control the reality they perceive.[35]

The Syracusan Antipholus here demands not merely that Dromio reflects back to him his own mood, as Ferdinand does of courtiers in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* when he tells them to "be my touchwood: take fire when I give fire, that is, laugh when I laugh."[36] By trying to fix Dromio, he strives to make one out of the two of them, in a way similar to his father's attempt to have both sets of twins merge into one master and one slave by manipulating their names and thus making a distinction in each pair "literally unthinkable." Not only "thought is dependent on words,"[37] as George Orwell argues in the "Appendix" to his *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, but perception is, as well. Not having a name to distinguish himself from his brother, the Syracusan cannot imagine his identity to be independent of that of his brother.[38] Moreover, he compulsively forces the

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[34] According to "emission (or extramission) theories, […] light originated in the eye and was projected from it. […] Empedocles […] believed that the eye consisted of an internal fire sending out light like a lantern." St. Augustine added theological depth to the emission theory by arguing that "spiritual light was the internal illuminant of ideal forms, and physical light was […] analogous to this." Nicholas J. Wade, *Perception and Illusion: Historical Perspectives*, Library of the History of Psychological Theories Ser. (New York: Springer Science, 2005) 51f, 57.

[35] Prince Harry hopes to command the eyes of his future subjects on a similar principle, by trying to "imitate the sun" in Shakespeare's *1 Henry IV*. *The Norton Shakespeare*. *Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York, London: W W Norton, 1997) 1157–1222. 1.2.175.

[36] John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, ed. David Bevington et al. (New York, London: W. W. Norton, 2002) 1755–1830. 1.1.125f.

[37] George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Everyman's Library Ser. 134 (1949; New York, Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992) 312.

[38] In his discussion of how a writer's awareness of himself within the universe rose during the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, Colin Morris emphasizes the importance of a "skilful Latinity" saying that what

appearance of his slave to follow his perception of him, so that he can control him and carry out the merger of the two Dromios, as well, in his thinking, to obey his father. In order to carry out what he believes must have been his father's wish, he has to maintain the identity of names and make, at the same time, any difference imperceptible.

The Syracusan's restrictive perception imposes a paralysis on Dromio and reduces him to a suffering body. However, all this originates in the namelessness of the merchant son and seems to fit its context in the mercantile economy of Ephesus. Thus, language controls perception, and both put a limit on action with the help of some added violence to ensure their effect. Robin Allott's argument corroborates this hierarchy: according to him, language structures perception which, in turn, coordinates bodily action.[39] *The Comedy of Errors* presents this hierarchy in its limiting effect as the Syracusan is shaping his identity, and that of Dromio, to satisfy the requirement of singularity he expects the social organization in Ephesus to impose on him.

Adriana's complaint to the Syracusan that her husband refused to comply with her invitation for dinner, the Syracusan realizes, squares with the dialogue he had with the Ephesian Dromio. "Villain, thou liest," he accuses now (the wrong) Dromio, "for even her very words / Didst thou deliver to me on the mart" (2.2.162f). Moreover, Adriana calls him and his slave by "names" which they share with the rightful bearers of those names. The explanation for all this, however, must not be that another master and his slave, Antipholus and Dromio, in search of whom the Syracusans arrived just "two hours" (2.2.147) ago, are in fact in Ephesus. By accepting that this might be the case and attempting to verify it, the Syracusan might put his father in an untenable

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"cannot be verbalized can scarcely be thought." *The Discovery of the Individual 1050–1200*, Church History Outlines Ser. (London: SPCK, 1972) 7f.

[39] According to Robin Allott, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Edward Sapir, and Benjamin Lee Whorf developed a theory saying that "the world we see is systematically distorted by the language we speak." According to Hans-Lukas Teuber, Allott continues, "Language imposes order on events by permitting their classification." Allott argues that in its internal structuring language follows patterns of perception and both of them derive their working mechanisms "from the physiological and neurological structures for the co-ordination of bodily action." In their hierarchy, however, the more derivative system of language controls perception which, in turn, directs motion. *The Natural Origin of Language: The Structural Inter-relation of Language, Visual Perception and Action* (Knebworth, Hertfordshire: Able, 2001) 25, 27, 29.

position. If he made it explicit that he has actually *found* both the lost son and his slave, he would inevitably form the basis for a question about his own identity. In doing so, the Syracusan would undermine the false reality Egeon fed him for almost eighteen years. The reunion the traveler son is trying to effectuate would provide embarrassing evidence for Egeon's unfair treatment of him.

However, until he brings the difference between himself and his brother as a fact to light, he remains "estrangèd from thyself" (2.2.119), as Adriana says about her husband, not knowing how right she is, at the same time, in addressing this to her Syracusan brother-in-law. To lose his way in the labyrinth of social relations, a character has to forget first how to observe a sense of depth in his own personality and conceive of himself, instead, as one among other solid pieces on a board. To see himself as such a piece, a marble among other similar ones, in turn, he has to acknowledge the control of a higher, omnispective eye over himself and submit to its point of view. However she misidentifies him, Adriana recognizes with a clairvoyant's perspicuity the Syracusan's almost religious belief in authority and reminds him of the importance of a horizontal relationship of solidarity in love that might protect him against subjecting himself to a belief in such a power and against subjugating those for whom he is responsible to his own tyrannical rule.

The Syracusan seems to conclude that complying with the dictates of appearances and giving in to the power of Adriana's presence might save him the trouble of going against the training he has received at home and the conscience he has developed as a result. "To me she speaks" (2.2.180), he decides, and enters the virtual reality he revolted against five years ago when he left his father's house: he is again Antipholus, and now he will be able to live the life of a hero of that name. Her "theme" (180) now seems a "dream" (181) he might have had before, but he knowingly follows the "error" of "eyes and ears" (183) to "entertain the offered fallacy" (185). To make it easier for himself to accept the lie, he blames it on external forces of a pagan world he must not resist: "This is the fairyland," he says to his Dromio. "We talk with goblins, owls, and sprites! / If we obey them not, […] / They'll suck our breath, or pinch us black and blue" (188–191). What is, in

fact, a conscious act of falling back on a pattern he grew up with, the Syracusan characterizes as an unanticipated transformation "in mind" (194f).

In Allott's and Orwell's terms, language controls thought, perception, and bodily action; therefore, to eliminate a vital distinction of identity between two persons at the top, in their proper names as signifiers, results in severe restrictions on the lower levels as well. It seems, we cannot think, perceive, or act out what we cannot say. The Syracusan cannot be who he is as long as his name is Antipholus; therefore, he has to act the way he thinks Antipholus would. In this sense, he is different and creative, because, while Antipholus *is* Antipholus, the Syracusan *acts* like he is. This, however, does not mean he does so out of his own free choice. While Stanley Cavell argues that *meaning* something is conditioned by the system of language as much as by the speaker's intention;[40] here it seems appropriate to assert that the Syracusan cannot even perceive the world and cannot act in it the way he would as himself, whoever that self is, but he has to do so in compliance with what the situation communicates to him as the proper way to perceive it and act in it. Instead of examining with Cavell how language conditions "what we should mean in (by) saying" something (8), we should look into the question of whether the Syracusan is capable of thinking, perceiving, or acting with any degree of freedom as long as he inhabits the shell[41] called Antipholus. He cannot *mean* something and say it; rather, he has to say what he believes is expected of him and try to *mean* it. This is what he is probably getting at when he says, "I'll say as they say, and persever so, / And in this mist at all adventures go" (2.2.214f).

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[40] Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say? A Book of Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969/2002) 39f.

[41] Sir Would-be Politic dons a tortoise shell to disguise himself in Ben Jonson's *Volpone,* but as soon as he tries to creep like a tortoise, the merchants discover him. *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, ed. David Bevington et al. (New York, London: W W Norton, 2002) 679–771. 5.4.54–74.

4. Dromio of Syracuse

Under the effect of Antipholus of Syracuse's effort to eliminate the doubleness of the twin slaves, the challenge they represent to his perception, and the tension they create, by extension, in their names, Dromio of Syracuse senses the loss of his own humanity and his reduction to an inferior being. His master demands that he "fashion your demeanor to my looks" and threatens to "beat" in his "sconce" the "method" of appearing the way he wants to see him (2.2.33f). The word itself conveys a powerful presupposition Dromio is bold enough to question. "Sconce, call you it?," he asks and attempts to represent his dignity in words to forestall further degradation: "So you would leave battering, I had rather have it a head" (35f). However, next, Dromio restricts himself to recording the process of being objectified: "An you use these blows long, I must get a sconce for my head and ensconce it too" (36–38).

The only powerful way to defy being degraded is to assert one's superiority in asking the embarrassing question for a reason. In his response to Dromio's question, the violent master inadvertently admits the inferiority of the effort to do away with difference, with the variety in an independent existence, and with individual "wit" (2.2.38), for the sake of an easy controllability. "I pray you, sir, why am I beaten?" (39), Dromio ventures. The all-too obedient and rigorous Syracusan makes sure Dromio has to ask again before he agrees to answer, so that two questions arise, a "why" and a "wherefore," opening up more eagerly for closure. And the master alleges that the provocation itself is the cause: "Why, first," he says, "– for flouting me; and then, wherefore – for urging it the second time to me" (45f). That is, the persistent questioning seems to provoke the beating. Stephen Spielberg echoes the dialogue four-hundred years later in Helen Hirsch's complaint to Oskar Schindler about the way Herr Kommandant Amon Goeth humiliated her: "I said to him," she says, "'Why are you beating me?' He said, 'The reason I beat you now is because you ask

why I beat you.'"[42] In *The Comedy of Errors*, as in *Schindler's List*, the assailant suffers from a severe restriction that does not allow him to accept the identity of his victim that, in many respects, resembles his but is still different. Moreover, in both the play and the movie, language and designation dominate perception.[43] Dromio of Syracuse rises to the level of rhetoric and questions the ideology behind the treatment he receives in a lucid discourse. The Syracusan master cannot argue with him, but if he allowed his slave to negotiate the question of identity in such terms, it could soon force him to formulate his own status in the linguistic order and ask subversive questions about paternal authority.

However, Dromio keeps asserting his independent "wit" (2.2.38) in language. First, he sums up the worthlessness of his master's explanation asking, "Was there ever any man thus beaten out of season, / When in the why and the wherefore is neither rhyme nor reason?" (47f). Indeed, the clandestine paradox in the treatment that deprives the slave of a self is an enemy of clear formulations: he is told that his subsistence depends on his success in pleasing his master, but he is constantly reminded of his failure to do so. The defiant Dromio still flaunts his wit, producing, to borrow Charles Baudelaire's words, "a few beautiful verses to prove" he is "not the lowest of men, […] not inferior" to his master, whom he would have reason now to "despise."[44] Then, he produces evidence for his intellectual superiority in an almost sixty-line long repartee where he is continuously ahead of his master in wit.

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[42] Stephen Spielberg, *Schindler's List* 1993 Universal Pictures.
[43] In the movie, Amon Goeth, wandering around Helen Hirsch, who is frozen by fear, questions his own perception of who she is and wrestles with the power of designations: "You know, maybe what's wrong isn't – it's not us – it's this. I mean, when they compare you to vermin and to rodents and to lice, I just, uh … you make a good point, a very good point. *[He strokes her hair]* Is this the face of a rat? Are these the eyes of a rat? 'Hath not a Jew eyes?' I feel for you, Helen. *[He decides not to kiss her]* No, I don't think so. You're a Jewish bitch. You nearly talked me into it, didn't you? *[He beats her]*
[44] Charles Baudelaire, "One O'Clock in the Morning," *Paris Spleen* (New York: New Directions, 1970) 16.

5. Adriana

While Luciana blames Antipholus of Ephesus' absence from dinner on his obligations "out o' door" (2.1.11) in the business world of Ephesus and his failing sense of time (8), or kairos,[45] Adriana identifies the effect of the lack of Antipholus' kind look on her own face with the passage of time, chronos, in bringing about the loss of her physical attractiveness. "I at home starve for a merry look," she complains. If "homely age" has "th' alluring beauty took / From my poor cheek," she concludes, "Then he hath wasted it" (88–90). She misses a "touch" (111) that, she says, keeps even gold shiny and brilliant. Such care would preserve the "biding" (110) intrinsic value of precious metal and protect her against the effect of "falsehood and corruption" in any man "that hath a name" (113, 112). In these words Adriana locates herself outside the traffic of exchangeable values, the trade her husband pursues, which is likely to make him elude personal attachment and judge even human beings based on their surface appearance. "I know his eye doth homage otherwhere" (104), she says, taking it for granted that, although Antipholus of Ephesus might identify her correctly, he misrecognizes her.

In the next scene, Adriana misidentifies the Syracusan as his Ephesian twin and, as an ironic consequence, she addresses her words against her husband to him: her Antipholus, she complains, fails to acknowledge her intrinsic value. That value, she argues, consists in the very fluidity of her self that has been blended in marriage with the liquid self of her husband. It may be easy to "fall / A drop of water in the breaking gulf," she illustrates the idea in a simile, but no one can "take unmingled thence that drop again / Without addition or diminishing" (2.2.124–27). Nonetheless, through his alleged unfaithfulness, their fused selves are now commingled with other selves: "if we two be one, and thou play false, / I do digest the poison of thy flesh, / Being strumpeted by thy contagion" (141–43). The ensuing sexual contamination tarnishes her identity that only an

[45] "right timing and due measure." James L. Kinneavy and Catherine R. Eskin, "*Kairos* in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*," *Written Communication* 17.3 (July 2000): 432–44. 432. *Sage Journals*. 25 Aug. 2014.

untainted marital union could safely preserve. Malleability is the essence of her female self, which relies not merely on the support of a solid male presence as its mainstay, as she argues, identifying herself in a metaphor with "a vine" that "communicate[s]" with the "strength" of "an elm" in her husband. Her female self also depends on the content of her husband's persona for nourishment, as she indicates with her reference to the "sap" of the tree which is now "infect[ed]" due to the tree's "confusion" with parasitic "ivy, brier, or idle moss" "Usurping" it (173, 175, 179, 177).

The way vital fluids work in these figures of speech reminds the reader of the confluence of blood in John Donne's "The Flea" as the means of a communion between the speaking persona and his love who are "more than married"[46] as a result. In a less material sense, two "souls"[47] meet between the bodies of the lovers in Donne's "The Ecstasy," so that "Love […] doth mix" them and "makes both one" (l. 35f) to form "a new concoction" (l. 27) in the "alchemical sense of sublimation or purification" (l. 27, n5). However, Adriana's figures add a strong sense of vulnerability to the image of intermingling liquids that, without a firm embedment of the formal marital union in the network of other social institutions, might easily lose its unique formula. The perfect union in marriage, it seems, requires not only the blending of selves but also tight boundaries that the husband has to provide around it, around the "true bed" (144), so to speak, to protect it in the male-dominated mercantile and legal systems against the kind of exchange and circulation that deprive units of currency of their intrinsic, personal value.

Adriana believes that this value can be recovered in an encounter of selves when she invites, by mistake, the Syracusan, saying, "Husband, I'll dine above with you today, / And shrive you of a thousand idle pranks" (2.2.206f). In the ensuing transfusion of selves, Adriana might hope to restore a unity of husband and wife with a bias: as a reenactment of an ideal and idealized symbiosis of mother and child. She nostalgically reminisces about a time when, she argues, her

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[46] John Donne, "The Flea," *Collected Poetry*, ed. Ilona Bell (London: Penguin, 2012) 29f. l. 11.
[47] Donne, "The Ecstasy," *Collected Poetry* 38–40. l. 15

husband still needed her, like infants need their mother: as "an information filter between the world and the child."[48] In this, childless Adriana seems to imagine a phase of development in which the baby "comes to know the world" through the mother who acts as "the prime source for stimulating a baby's senses" (3f). At that time, she appears to recall, Antipholus vowed, "unurged," that he was not able to perceive audible "words," visible or tangible "objects," nor could feel the taste of "meat," "Unless I spake, or looked, or touched, or carved to thee" (112–14, 116f). In such an imaginary state of dependence, Adriana, the only voice that "spake," eyes that "looked," skin that "touched," and the nourishing caregiver who "carved" (117) for him, would not mediate between Antipholus and the mercantile or legal systems of Ephesus, but would rather isolate him from its social world and prolonge his vital connection to her body. Adriana seems to wish to reverse the actual state of affairs that shows her to depend on Antipholus as a node of connection that lends her a fixed place in the male social network and provides her with a livelihood.

6. Antipholus of Ephesus

The Ephesian mercantile world that gives a framework to Antipholus of Syracuse's identity organizes itself around individual material interest. His guide in Ephesus, a Merchant, turns down the Syracusan's invitation for a casual walk "about the town" and dinner, because of his "present business" with "certain merchants, / Of whom," he says, "I hope to make much benefit" (1.2.29, 24f). Another merchant, Balthasar, warns Antipholus of Ephesus not to risk his "yet ungallèd estimation" by breaking into his own house while his wife might be entertaining a substitute there. "A vulgar comment will be made of it," he cautions

> That may with foul intrusion enter in
> And dwell upon your grave when you are dead;
> For slander lives upon succession,

[48] Joan Steen Wilentz, *The Senses of Man* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1968) 5.

Forever housed where it gets possession.

(3.1.102, 100, 103–106)

Balthasar describes the feared deterioration of Antipholus' good name in terms of the decomposition of his dead body. In his words, a "vulgar comment" appears as the first worm that enters his grave and that there "lives upon succession," that is, multiplies. By implication, preserving his reputation untouched might protect his body intact. The medieval notion of the "immortality or sempiternity[49] of public bodies" underlies Shakespeare's image. According to Walter Ullmann, this idea was based on the assumption that the law was the soul of a public body: "[b]ecause the soul was said to be immortal, public bodies, which were what they were through the law, could also not die and were credited, therefore, with sempiternity." His "yet ungallèd estimation" connects the Ephesian brother to "the idea of right order, which holds the public and corporate body together"[50] through which he, too, can possess sempiternity.

Antipholus understands and shares the concern for his reputation and knows how to maintain a "merry" (3.1.108) mood by not interfering with events that might evolve into a scandal. He counters his own substitution in marriage by substituting "a wench of excellent discourse, / Pretty and witty, wild and yet, too, gentle" (109f) for his wife and dines, instead, with her. The chain he promised to his wife (2.1.106), he now decides, will be delivered not to the Phoenix but to the Porpentine and will end up on the Courtesan's neck instead of his wife's. "Since mine own doors refuse to entertain me," Antipholus justifies the change, "I'll knock elsewhere" (3.1.120f). Apparently, he has a different ideal of a relationship than the irreversible merger of two selves, which makes them unique in each other's experience, as his wife imagines it. The Ephesian "man

[49] "Duration without end; perpetuity." "Sempiternity," *Oxford English Dictionary*, ed. Judy Pearsall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) 17 Aug. 2014.
[50] Walter Ullmann, *The Individual and Society in the Middle Ages* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966) 49.

about town," Altman concludes, "sees a wife merely as a mindless instrument of his own comfort."[51] In his perception, the unique identity of his companion is less decisive than the "entertain[ment]" she as a "hostess" (3.2.120, 119) can provide.

The last scene of Act two and the first of Act three oppose Adriana's attempt to (re)establish a personal attachment in the intimacy of an upstairs bedroom of the Phoenix to the "idle pranks" (2.2.207) of exchangeable faces and names (3.1.47) of men in a farcical matrix of identities in front of the house in the street. While Antipholus replaces his wife as if she were a piece on a board, a marble among other marbles, a link in a chain of identical links, Adriana has withdrawn "above" (2.2.206) with the wrong brother to restore the personal bond she has lost. Still, besides the irony, Adriana's "error" raises hope in the reader or the audience that the Syracusan is a better candidate for such an encounter of authentic characters than his Ephesian brother and that Adriana has thus inadvertently made an exchange worth her while. Can the Syracusan fill the emptiness we sense behind Antipholus' carefully polished public persona and make up for what Adriana has lost in her marriage? Can he even surprise his father with a reward for his penitential pilgrimage in quest of his kin, some of which he lost in shipwreck and some through his callous suppression of their identity? This is certainly a lot to expect from a cautiously rebellious son who is torn between his obedience and his sense of dignity. Such an expectation puts the burden of responsibility on his shoulders for the well-being of an entire family, stricken by natural disaster and paternal inadequacy. Nonetheless, we experience the simultaneity of contrasting perspectives on identity inside and out of the Phoenix still with a lingering hope that the Syracusan son and Egeon had both set sail at least five years before the action began in pursuit of the same mission: to reunite a family as a framework that acknowledges and restores human integrity.

[51] Altman 168f.

7. Antipholus of Syracuse: Finding Himself

The kaleidoscope of "errors" takes another turn, and the Syracusan meets his chance to put down roots in a world away from home, to establish himself outside the family, and to assume responsibility for his own life as a family man, instead of being weighed down by decisions made by his father, who is himself hesitant to face up to their consequences. This is the Syracusan's opportunity to end his life as a substitute and begin one as himself. His words sound genuine, and they suggest that he is aware of the unique importance of the kairos and the world that is about to open up for him at this moment. He calls Adriana's sister, Luciana, his "sweet love" (3.2.58), and explains to her face to face that by this he refers to "thyself" who, at this moment, emerges as

> mine own self's better part;
> Mine eye's clear eye, my dear heart's dearer heart;
> My food, my fortune, and my sweet hope's aim;
> My sole earth's heaven, and my heaven's claim. (61–64)

A confluence of selves might as well take place. The Syracusan's images resemble those Adriana used in describing to him her own aspiration to be "better than thy dear self's better part" (2.2.122), thinking she was talking to her husband. She wished she would have his "sweet aspects" (110), that is, a "sunny look" (2.1.99) she was "starv[ing] for" (88), and that he would accept her as his only source of nourishment (2.2.116f). It seems the man she was actually talking to is responding to those wishes now as if they originated in Luciana, the desirous wife's sister. However, in *The Comedy of Errors* longing circulates in a virtually endless pattern of misplaced reactions: the Syracusan sounds here as if he was responding to Adriana's earlier invitation, which thwarts expectations of mutuality.

Nevertheless, the Syracusan's character shows through the extrinsic matrix of mistaken identities. He expects Luciana as a goddess to determine who he should become and thus to release him from his damaged sense of identity. Still, he seems to accept "Antipholus," the name she calls

him (3.2.30) and wishes to submit himself to her in a status little better than that of a child, in a way similar to how Adriana wanted her husband to do. However, while Adriana attempted to dominate her husband through his senses, that is, his audition, vision, tactition, and gustation (2.2.112–17), the Syracusan wishes to submit to Luciana on the level of discourse. "Teach me, dear creature, how to think and speak," he urges and wants her to initiate him into an understanding of her language, as if it was a kind of cypher:

> Lay open to my earthy-gross conceit,
> Smothered in errors, feeble, shallow, weak,
> The folded meaning of your words' deceit. (3.2.33–36)

The Syracusan succumbs to the power of Luciana's words that for him hold the promise of a divine revelation. In this "real plea for enlightenment,"[52] he is eager to be accepted in a signifying order different from the one in which he grew up. "Are you a god?," he asks full of hope, and begins to worship her as the custodian of an unknown system of meaning-making that would redefine his being: "Would you create me new? / Transform me then, and to your power I'll yield" (39f). In asserting that "to you do I decline," the Syracusan discovers his emerging identity and experiences for the first time "that I am I" (44, 41).

However, this "I" loses all character and melts into the female body as into a mold. After a brief acquaintance and her lecture to him about a "husband's office" (3.2.2) to make his wife "but believe" that he loves her (21f), the Syracusan urges Luciana to "Spread o'er the silver waves thy golden hairs," so that he can use them "as a bed […] and there lie" (48f). After a brief moment of unstable self-possession, the Syracusan seems to fall back on an almost suicidal urge of self-annihilation in the gravitational field of his Luciana. He likes to think that he would gain by death, if drowning in "Love" was his "means to die" (52, 51). For Luciana, however, this is sheer madness (53); the Syracusan, she believes, is projecting these images onto the world without them being

[52] Altman 172.

there: "It is a fault," she says, "that springeth from your eye" (55). While Luciana represents a hypocritical pragmatism in marriage, the Syracusan retreats into a formless subjectivism and dissolves uncritically in the object of his love. Rather than forging a meaningful bond, she and he represent the extreme opposites of an empty formalism, on the one hand, and an un-reflected state of overwhelming emotion, on the other, that do not complement each other.

The fact that his image of Luciana remains so far from her perception of herself is crucial to the evolution of the Syracusan's sense of identity. Due to the lack of a name of his own that would represent him to the outside world, he has not learned how to develop his persona as a container or façade to protect his "own content" (1.2.33), his core self, in his interaction with other characters or even with his inanimate environment. As a symptom of this deficiency in his identity, he said already at the moment of his arrival in Ephesus that he "will go lose himself" in his "view [of] the city" and disintegrate "Unseen," "like a drop of water […] in the ocean," due to what he calls his being "inquisitive" (30f, 38, 35f, 38). Now, in the scene of wooing and proposal, instead of introducing himself, which he by definition cannot do, this product of Syracusan upbringing simply says to Luciana that "I am thee" (3.2.66). Unlike Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*,[53] he supports his proposal by a declaration not of what he has but of what he does not: "Thou hast no husband yet, nor I no wife. / Give me thy hand" (68f). Luciana runs away from such a telling negativism.

As a result of the shipwreck, the "Syracusa" (1.1.36) of the comedy, Egeon's birth place and the home of his family, had become an exclusively male world where he lived with his son and his son's Dromio. In his story of adventure, Egeon presented himself as a merchant struggling with the forces of nature and the not always benevolent pagan deities. "[M]y end / Was wrought by nature" (33), he emphasizes, and describes his awareness of imminent threats to his and his family's

[53] The Syracusan's way to propose is indeed the very opposite of how Petruchio goes about it: "Petruchio is my name, Antonio's son, / A man well known throughout all Italy," he introduces himself to Baptista, Katherine's father. "You knew my father well," he moves on to the material details, "and in him me, / Left solely heir to all his lands and goods, / Which I have bettered rather than decreased. / Then tell me, if I get your daughter's love, / What dowry shall I have with her to wife? (2.1.71f, 123–27).

fortunes in the way he perceived signs in the workings of the elements that indicate the will of pagan gods. He was sailing with his family across the Ionian Sea from Epidamnum toward Syracuse until, he says, "the always wind-obeying deep / Gave any tragic instances of our harm" (63f). And then, "the heavens did grant" them some "obscurèd light" which "convey[ed] unto our fearful minds / A doubtful warrant of immediate death" (66–68). The fact that he reads natural phenomena as intimations of the gods' will gives us the impression that Egeon is part of an ancient world view. Nature is here the changing face of the gods, and while he struggles to assert himself against it, Egeon ultimately resigns himself and his kin to being the playthings of gods.

Although he grew up with his father, the Syracusan son does not experience nature and the gods as a unity, or even as allies in opposition to himself, as Egeon does. Divine power seems to have changed sides between the two generations, turning from the plural of pagan Rome into the singular in Christian monotheism, and now the Syracusan son does not have to fear or appease God anymore. However, nature remains an alien force to be tamed and is now lumped together with pagan and occult phenomena, and the power of women appears as one of these. When he demands the thousand marks he deposited with his slave, the amount that equals the value of a human life in Ephesus (1.1.21), the Syracusan emphasizes that God is on his side in a journey that involves actual sea voyage, his coming of age, that is, coming to terms with the past of his identity in kinship relations, on the one hand, and shaping his future identity in love, sexual attraction, and marriage, on the other, but which is also a financial enterprise. When he is asking for the money for the fifth time, he says to the Ephesian Dromio, "Now, as I am a Christian, answer me, / In what safe place you have bestowed my money; / Or I shall break that merry sconce of yours" (1.2.77–79). Below the shifting layers of his identity seems to run a constant current: the Syracusan is a Christian traveler with a clear sense of his financial interests and of his status as God's harbinger in the world.

In this respect, the Syracusan appears to be traveling in the opposite direction opposite than his father. Egeon is a merchant driven by guilt, which he is reluctant to admit, on a secret

mission to atone for his carelessness to his family and for having deprived his remaining kin of their names. The Syracusan son, however, seems to be running away from, rather than being driven by or identifying with, his father's moral concerns. In constructing his identity, he relies on a sense of ideological superiority his father does not have. He seems to be on his way to free himself of his father's scruples and to find a social pattern away from home which he can join for practical, rather than moral, considerations. While Egeon has personal experience and positive facts (even guilt is an inherent property of the self) to build his sense of identity, his falsely-named son seeks to define himself in negative terms, in opposition to roles and functions he tries out and then discards as not his own, and in opposition to other characters.

This acquired lack of integrity becomes apparent in the different attitudes the Syracusan exhibits toward his slave and his love respectively. We saw that he beats his own slave (2.2.23 SD), but he also subjects a different master's slave who happens to stray into his perceptual field to physical violence (1.2.92 SD), so that he can do away with the difference the Ephesian slave represents and that raises the intolerable possibility of multiple Dromios and Antipholuses. This pattern of the subjection of slave to master is the repetition of a similar one on a larger scale: the merchant who trades in a city other than his own will be executed, if not ransomed. As Duke Solinus explains,

> if any born at Ephesus
> Be seen at Syracusian marts and fairs;
> Again, if any Syracusian born
> Come to the bay of Ephesus, he dies,
> […]
> Unless a thousand marks be levied (1.1.16–21).

Shakespeare has arranged the two levels, that of a foreign merchant in Solinus' Ephesus, and of a slave exposed to the power of the Syracusan master, so that the former includes the latter and

repeats the relationship between the elements. As a result, the two formations behave like self-similar shapes that reappear on different levels of scale in fractal geometry.[54] The relentless regularity of these structures in *The Comedy of Errors* emphasizes the mechanical aspect of a rigid social organization in Ephesus.

Although the Syracusan son shows no awareness of the way the Ephesian society is structured, he enforces that structure by disciplining the Dromios and enacts one of its main organizing principles, the fear of pagan and occult forces, in his recurrent urge to run away from its women. The first time he hears the Ephesian Dromio talk about his mistress, who is allegedly waiting for the Syracusan with "dinner" (1.2.75) at "home" (48), he suspects the covert machinations of "Dark-working sorcerers that change the mind" and "Soul-killing witches that deform the body" (99f). When Adriana herself calls him "my husband" (2.2.118) and designates her body to be "consecrate to thee" (131), the Syracusan recognizes himself for the first time in alienation: he thinks he might be "Known unto" Adriana "and to myself disguised!" (3.1.213). Under Luciana's spell, he calls himself "Not mad, but mated," which might even mean the same as "mad:" "mated" is glossed as "amazed," "confounded," and "defeated" beside the more obvious sense of "married" (3.2.54 and n). Once Luciana refuses his selfless adoration and he meets his Dromio running, like "a man would run for life" (153), from Nell, the "kitchen wench" (95), who would be the slave's "wife" (154), the Syracusan decides that Ephesus is inhabited by "witches." He compares Luciana to a "mermaid" (155, 163) and says he wants to sail in "any bark," "any way from shore" (149, 147).

In the absence of positive values to support his sense of identity, the Syracusan shapes who he is characteristically in repeated acts of retreat. He associates women with pagan and occult forces and cannot treat them as his equals. While he initially obeys Adriana for fear of her

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[54] Benoit B. Mandelbrot calls fractals that exhibit self-similarity on different levels of scale "*scaling fractals*." *The Fractal Geometry of Nature* (New York: W. H. Freeman, 1983) 18.

witchcraft (2.2.189–91), he later declares, "even my soul / Doth for a wife abhor" (3.2.157f) her. Then, he surrenders to Luciana's power, only to flee her "mermaid's song" (163) still in the same scene. As Constance Jordan points out, humanist treatises also depicted pagan women who achieved "worldly glory," "not eternal glory" (244), in an ambiguous light: they "are always on the enemy side; the writer imagines them as it were at the borders of the culturally constituted community […], even as threatening the integrity of that community. But because they often brilliantly exemplify the nonbarbaric or civilized values of the writer's own society […] they also invite sympathy."[55] We observe the same hesitation in the Syracusan's attitude to his brother's wife and to her sister. Adriana and Luciana seem to live in a pre-Christian Ephesus, but they represent the "civilized values" of marital chastity and polite tactfulness respectively.

While Luciana takes the husband's infidelity for granted and boldly prescribes the Syracusan the symptom, so to speak, of audacious denial to maintain a semblance of peace in marriage, Adriana inverts the power relations suggested in contemporary marital advice. She interprets the Biblical statement that husband and wife are one flesh[56] in her own idiosyncratic way. Early modern tracts differ in their approaches to the literalness of the Biblical metaphor, but they generally represent "the husband as a kind of mother and the wife as a child."[57] Since the Genesis suggests that "Adam in effect gave birth to Eve," metaphors often reflect "the husband's fantasy of giving birth to the wife." Examples of organic unity in "bondage rhetoric" express the wife's inferiority to her husband: "she is joined to the husband's midsection" or is "part or a limb of

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[55] Constance Jordan, "Feminism and the Humanists: The Case of Sir Thomas Elyot's *Defence of Good Women*," *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Margaret W. Ferguson et al. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986) 242–58. 256.
[56] William Whittingham, *The Bible and Holy Scriptures Conteyned in the Olde and Newe Testament* (Geneva: Rouland Hall, 1560) Genesis 2:24. *Early English Books Online*. 19 June 2014.
[57] Sid Ray, "'Those Whom God Hath Joined Together.' Bondage Metaphors and Marital Advice in Early Modern England," *Domestic Arrangements in Early Modern England*, ed. Kari Boyd McBride (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2002) 15–47. 29. Interestingly, an earlier tract, Heinrich Bullinger's *The Christen State of Matrimonye* from 1546, allows for alternative interpretations, while William Gouge's *Of Domesticall Duties* from 1622 "insists that there is a literalness to biblical metaphors of marital unity."

her husband" (29). The kind of metaphors Ray identifies as "physiological" come exceedingly close to the way Adriana depicts her unity with her husband. Such figures "conjure an image of the married couple as a set of joined twins or as a monstrously deformed double body" (30). These apparently aim to inculcate the pain and virtual impossibility of separation in marriage. For example, Thomas Becon writes, "And lyke as the partes of a mans body when they are sundred one from another conceave an exceeding great anguish [and] doloures payne even so ought it to be an exceeding grefe for married folks to be separated."[58] These examples make it clear that when she depicts the ideal husband's perception of the world as filtered through his wife's senses, Adriana turns a well-known type of contemporary metaphor and imagery to her own advantage to brand an independent male identity as culturally illegitimate.

This self-assertiveness, however, undermines the Syracusan's confidence. Both Adriana and her sister resemble notable "pagan women celebrated in humanist defenses," who, Jordan asserts,

> functioned collectively as the image of what might be possible if accepted social custom, shaped by Christianity and medieval scholasticism, were no longer to determine the nature and status of women in European society. They presented a fruitful enigma, a point of reference for the interesting doubts and difficult questions surrounding the accepted view of women as subordinate to men.[59]

The Syracusan twice entertains the possibility of entering the unknown and choosing such a "culturally alien" (256), outspoken woman for his wife, and he shrinks from it in each case. His contradictory reactions are thus similar to the "overt disapproval marked with fear on one hand and occasional admiration on the other" that "great warrior maidens of Renaissance epic" (256f) are likely to provoke in the reader, as Jordan claims.

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[58] Thomas Becon's trans. of Bullinger sig. A6v. Qtd. in Ray 30.
[59] Jordan 256.

The Syracusan Dromio runs away from the kitchen wench in a fear that unites him with his master in a male homosocial bond and a corresponding male chauvinist perception, for the duration of an imaginary travel and colonizing adventure around the globe. Dromio describes Nell's complexion as "Swart, like my shoe" (3.2.102) and her shape as "spherical, like a globe" (114), which inspires both men to rise above her in their fantasy, enjoy a bird's-eye-view of parts of her body and name them as countries that emerge as colonies and rich continents they will possess. The anti-blazon is an exercise in containing and transcending female possessiveness by representing a woman's body as an uncivilized natural phenomenon and, at the same time, in shaping the concept of the earth as an ungodly monster to be conquered in a Christianizing mission with God on the side of the colonizers.

The discursive effort to subjugate Nell reverses the recurrent fear in the men of being known as bodies and supplants it with their confidence in the superior subject position of knowing and the gesture of naming. Nell recognizes Dromio by "privy marks" on his male body, as he enumerates them, by "the mark of my shoulder, the mole in my neck, [and] the great wart on my left arm" (3.2.140–42), while Adriana and Luciana call the two men, as the Syracusan says, "by our names," as it were "by inspiration" (2.2.165f) or "by […] wonder" (3.2.30). Although it amounts characteristically to misidentifications, master and slave conceive of such anagnorisis as being "claim[ed]" by a woman in a way a man would lay claim to his "horse" or a "curtal dog" and thus being degraded to the level of "a beast" (82, 86f, 145). As a result, they must reverse their power relation to pre-Christian women by dividing Nell's representative body in their imagery into parts they have to avoid, like "her buttocks" that stand for the "bogs" of Ireland (117f), on the one hand, and resources, on the other, that might benefit the traveler: her "grease" would "burn" in "a lamp" (96, 98, 97) and her nose might shine like "rubies, carbuncles, [and] sapphires" do in "America, the Indies" (134, 132). Such designations control, not only the way men perceive women, but, more importantly, the way the roles of perceived and perceiver are distributed along the gender divide.

We moved far from the question and the expectation that the Syracusan might fill in his brother's empty public persona with a sensitive and thoughtful self and thus merge into one satisfyingly complete identity with him, under one name, to please their father. Once he runs away from both his brother's wife and her sister and refers to them as "witches" (155), there is not much hope left that he would form a meaningful attachment to Adriana or even to the eligible Luciana. As for the solidarity with his slave, its only basis is the exclusion of women from their circle. The prospect that the nameless brother, after having left his all-male home in Syracuse, will make a genuine discovery in Ephesus is already waning when the chain enters the stage. The single most important stage prop in the play is a central symbol that is meaningful in two ways. Notwithstanding the fact that it is made of gold in a "chargeful fashion" (4.1.29), as a single object without an owner, passing through many hands, it epitomizes the property of indistinct commonness. On the other hand, in its structure, consisting of identical links, it represents the democratic Ephesian mercantile and legal systems that connect members of the urban male society in a strictly regulated circulation of goods at the expense of taking away those members' unique individuality. By withdrawing from a spontaneous and meaningful communication of selves between him and a woman, the Syracusan brother seems ready to join the kind of formalized exchange the chain stands for both in its shape and its fate.

The change in meaning the chain goes through as a result of shifts in its intended and actual passage through hands anticipates in one respect the journey of the handkerchief in *Othello* Shakespeare composed ten years later:[60] both objects start out as love tokens, and, in the course of the traffic to which they are subjected, they lose their significance as gifts that represent a unique

[60] We know of two performances, ten years apart, of *The Comedy of Errors* in Shakespeare's own time, both of which took place on December 28, Innocents' Day. Shakespeare might have originally composed the play for the first "in the hall of Gray's Inn in Holborn, London," in 1594, which ended in disorder and was, therefore, "ever afterwards called 'The Night of Errors'." The other took place in 1604. Charles Whitworth, "Introduction," *The Comedy of Errors* by Shakespeare (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). 1–79. 1. According to the records, the King's Men presented *Othello* as a new play "at King James I's Whitehall Palace on November 1, 1604." Kim F. Hall, "Introduction," *Othello* by Shakespeare (Boston, New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007) 1–42. 2.

emotional attachment. While its function to connect is organically inscribed in the making and the very fabric of the handkerchief, the shape and structure of the chain opens up an inherent ambiguity in its signification: its links are connected to, and isolated from, each other at the same time. Similarly, Ephesian citizens are "chained" together in a society organized by rules of commerce and law, but, at the same time, they are bound to maintain their own flawless reputation that encapsulates each of them separately in an image in the other merchants' eyes. These two potentials in the meaning of the chain as a symbol come into a play of interdependence when the Syracusan Dromio alerts Adriana to the fact that her husband has been arrested on a "chain, a chain" (4.2.51) for allegedly (through the intervention of his brother unseen to him) violating the rule of "credit" and "reputation" (4.1.68, 71), which is the "law in Ephesus" (83) that cannot be bent, as the craftsman Angelo emphasizes, even for the sake of a "brother" (77). When one link seems to fail in its autonomous function, the others tighten their grip around it and secure its position in the "chain:" because Antipholus of Ephesus is not willing to pay for the jewel Angelo has delivered to the wrong twin, the goldsmith cannot settle his debt to the Second Merchant. As a result, Antipholus, the link in the commercial cycle that seems to have malfunctioned, will be arrested: as Angelo puts it, "I attach you by this officer" (73).

By accepting the chain, the Syracusan brother enters the remorseless Ephesian system of exchange of convertible values we saw at work above. Even though he is aware that it was not made for him but for someone else with the same name who should be sojourning at the Porpentine, he is ready to pay its price. "I bespoke it not" (3.2.171), he protests first, but then insists that Angelo, the goldsmith, "receive the money now" (176). Nonetheless, there is no escape even from the credit his brother has earned in the business world: Angelo leaves without accepting immediate payment, indicating the strong trust that forms a vital net among established businessmen in Ephesus and at the same time controls their transactions. The Syracusan does not run away from this kind of exchange, as he did from a sexual entanglement with Adriana, who demanded that he subject his

perception of the world to hers, or with Luciana, who asserted her superior integrity and discernment in making a clear distinction between "an honest suit" (4.2.14) and the "shame" of "false love" in a "show of blindness" (3.2.10, 8). By this time, it seems, the Syracusan son has had enough experience to overcome the emotional turmoil of an adolescent and the desire to melt into the frame of another character's persona.

At the same time, when he joins the eternal present of the circulation of material goods among the industrious citizens of Ephesus, the Syracusan Antipholus unknowingly helps erase the historic dimension from the consciousness of its male-dominated community. Adriana claims to have been the originally intended recipient of the chain. However, she would have rather dispensed with the luxury of possessing it, if she could have enjoyed what the token stood for: her husband's attention. "Sister, you know," she confides to Luciana, "he promised me a chain; / Would that alone, a love he would detain," she contemplates wistfully, "So he would keep fair quarter with his bed!" (2.1.106–108).[61] The next "link" in the chain of intended recipients is the Courtesan. When, in an attempt to rekindle her husband's abated passion, Adriana retires, by mistake, with his twin to the intimacy of an upstairs room at the Phoenix, Antipholus of Ephesus is ready with a response to being locked out: if only "to spite my wife," he decides to "bestow" the chain on his "hostess" at the Porpentine (3.1.118, 117, 119). Nonetheless, the chain is still in the making, and when the tardy jeweler catches up with the Syracusan in the street, believing he is his customer, the jeweler wishes it would cement the marriage bond between Adriana and her husband.

But the chain ends up in the Syracusan brother's hands. The Courtesan demands it from him (4.3.45), since the Ephesian Antipholus promised it to her (4.1.23) after he promised it to his wife. If she has not sacrificed a life of yearning dedication in the hope of a "look" or a "touch" (2.1.88, 111) as Adriana has, the Courtesan has already given Antipholus a "diamond" "ring" (4.3.67, 66) for it, so

[61] Adriana associates the news about her husband's arrest with the promise in the symbol of the marriage bond into which she could rescue him from his custody: when she hears the Dromio who comes for the "bail" (4.1.80) speak about "*a* chain," she exclaims, "What, *the* chain?" (4.2.51f, emphasis added).

it would be part of a barter transaction to upgrade her collection of jewelry. Once it is completed, she says to the wrong brother, she would "be gone, sir, and not trouble you" (68). The chain does not stand for the emotional content of a marital bond anymore; it rather represents the commercial value of "Two hundred ducats" (4.4.135), and the Courtesan would fain exchange it for a ring she gave to the Ephesian Antipholus worth "forty ducats" (81) only: "I pray you, sir," she gives the Syracusan the alternative, "my ring, or else the chain" (75). In her usage, "to cheat me" (76) has the exclusively material sense of not remunerating her for her services lavishly. At the same time, the price for the Ephesian Antipholus' freedom comes to exactly the same amount as the value of the chain: "Two hundred ducats." The Syracusan brother is holding the worth of his brother's ransom, which suggests that they are connected through mere numerical quantities. They are parts of the same surface reality but blotted out from each other's view; they are two aspects, different projections of the same identity: two incomplete images that need to be integrated into one to appear solid. All fluid emotional content, the chaos of desire, the memory of past fulfilment, together with the hope of a recovery of these, have disappeared. The twins do not seem to be related through their history anymore.

The Syracusan brother's desire to restore his own identity in the context of the family he was born into seems to evaporate when he is about to fill a slot in a social system that transforms, overwrites, or simply abandons the kind of ideational and emotional content that filled Adriana's sense of her self, that was part of the integrity Luciana represented, and that the Syracusan seemed to embark on to explore. When Angelo leaves him indebted to him, the traveler is puzzled at first: "What I should think of this, I cannot tell" (3.2.179), he wonders. But then, he takes the jewel and tells himself, "there's no man is so vain / That would refuse so fair an offered chain" (180f). Have his "adventures" (2.2.215) with Adriana upstairs at the Phoenix left him unaffected? Has his eagerness to transcend his "earthly-gross conceit, / Smothered in errors, feeble, shallow, weak" and to learn anew from a "dear creature" like Luciana "how to think and speak" (3.2.34f, 33) yielded no

lasting results? Has he not experienced a formative exchange with either of these women? Has he fully surmounted the phase of experimentation in the process of maturation, or has it left a mark on his sense of who he is? Is the past adventure going to enable him to enrich the larger community he is going to enter and the family that will eventually reincorporate him? The analysis of the last two acts will hopefully yield answers to these questions concerning the evolution of the Syracusan Antipholus' sense of identity.

8. Antipholus of Syracuse: Firmly Embedded

Five years before the action of the comedy begins, the traveler son left his father's house in Syracuse in search of his twin brother of the same name, Antipholus. Although he has not seen him yet, in Ephesus everybody gives clear signs that they know such a man. "There's not a man I meet but doth salute me," the Syracusan muses, "As if I were their well-acquainted friend; / And everyone doth call me by my name" (4.3.1–3), he adds. His inability to make the obvious connection is acceptable, on the face of it, only if he does not know the name of the character he is looking for and, in addition, if he does not reckon with the common experience that one half of a set of twins might look just like the other.[62] Nonetheless, since the incomprehensible curiosity of the circumstance that one can in fact have an identical double prevented him from making the necessary logical move at first, the resulting deferral has begun to generate a sense in the audience as well that the phenomenon must indeed be extraordinary. The more the Syracusan is incorporated in the Ephesian community by mistake, the greater our expectation of a resolution of the absurdity.

From the moment that the Syracusan traveler ignores his own "computation" and his "host's report" (2.2.4), which render the assumption unlikely that he met the same Dromio twice in rapid

[62] Viola and Sebastian miss each other with a similarly fatal precision until the last scene of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. *The Norton Shakespeare. Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York, London: W W Norton, 1997) 1768–1821.

succession, the mechanism of the uncanny begins to take over the organization of the plot. The Syracusan twin is not only in search of his double, but he acts out in front of us the process of repression that leads to the uncanny experience of having one. In other words, through the act of dispelling the logical doubt about a physically impossible assumption, that is, that his own Dromio has returned "so soon" (1.2.43), the young Syracusan master evokes the perception that the sameness of the two slaves, and thus, by extension, of the two masters, is possible in some other way. Thus, he creates his uncanny double by denying the possibility that it can exist. Then, by quickly forgetting how he himself brought about this irrational probability in the face of, or rather by circumventing, the rational impossibility, he makes this detour seem the only way of dealing with the ghost he has conjured. He makes its presence felt by avoiding it. As a result, we become more and more fascinated by our own expectation that not simply a brother of the master and a brother of the slave but another Dromio and another Antipholus might actually appear onstage.

In the first Act it still seems that the Syracusan will weigh possibilities rationally and investigate them in an orderly fashion. At the beginning of Act four, scene three, however, his avoidance of looking for his brother or of even taking into account his existence, and thus remembering the actual purpose of his mission, becomes more blatant than before. So far, we have forgiven him all this on account of the occasionally amusing, other times frightening references to occult and magical forces, and of his involvement with matters of ideational and emotional content that related him to the pagan sisters at Ephesus. Eventually, however, all this will be lumped together with an undefined notion of the demonic and summed up in a global perspective on the figure of Nell, the kitchen wench. The image of her body he constructs in concert with his slave provides the Syracusan master with the impetus he needs to surmount a fixation on his and others' selves and to become a link in the chain in the trade and commerce of Ephesus. By aspiring to the same status that his brother assumes, he becomes more and more indistinguishable from him, as his father predicted at their birth (1.1.52).

By the end of Act three, the Syracusan traveler has abandoned all concern with the content of his own soul or the desire of others. From the beginning of Act four, the plot renders the structural peculiarity of the contrasting parallel realities more prominent than ever before. Pairs of master and slave alternate in front of our eyes, vying for the same position in the Ephesian society, like incompatible elements that mingle in a closed system drifting toward entropy. In the first two acts we encountered the Syracusan twin only, while in the third act, the brothers took turns once, at the beginning of scene two. In contrast, the fourth Act gives occasion for three such shifts, leaving an ever diminishing interval between the exit of one brother and the entry of another: Antipholus of Ephesus is led away under arrest in the first scene 77 lines before his Syracusan brother shows up in the street in the third. The Ephesian appears next, in the fourth scene, still accompanied by a jailer, only 16 lines after the other ran away from the Courtesan as if she was a "witch" (4.3.77) in the third. Finally, the Syracusan enters again, "*with his rapier drawn*" (4.4.144 SD), just 12 lines after his Ephesian brother was led away, in the same scene, seized by Dr. Pinch and guarded by an Officer, as a madman who refuses to pay his debt. This creates a sense of rotation at an ever increasing speed.

Our spontaneous identification with the main character has taught us to observe a narrow perceptual horizon and not look for an explanation of unusual phenomena beyond it. This has given rise to an intuition that the action is controlled by invisible forces that have forbidden the Syracusan traveler to consider the circumstances that are most likely to affect how he perceives his own and his slave's identity. This constraint or limitation both distinguishes him from his brother and makes them behave similarly, at the same time. Both of them are ignorant of the context of their experience; but while the Ephesian twin *cannot* know that his brother is near, his Syracusan counterpart apparently *must* disregard the same possibility. Especially from the beginning of the fourth Act, when the mercantile logic and the rigor of the law tighten around the Ephesian, we have a sense that individual choices are increasingly limited. Still, as in the first lines of the second scene

of the second Act, the Syracusan shows occasional signs of a faint awareness that his perception is limited: when his Dromio offers him the bail he never asked for, he remarks, "The fellow is distracted, and so am I; / And here we wander in illusions" (4.3.40f)—a comment that could summarize Guildenstern's experience in Tom Stoppard or that of other characters in absurdist drama.

In Act two, scene two, the Syracusan slave exercises his wit in formulating in elaborate images the idea of aging and that time passes remorselessly and irreversibly (2.2.65–106). There is "no time," for example, he argued, "to recover hair lost by nature" (101f). In the second and third scenes of Act four, however, he mingles with this the theme of spatial limitations. He reports to Adriana on her husband's arrest in a series of images and puns that represent closed space and constraint on physical movement, some of which have a strong religious connotation. For example, Adriana's husband is, the Syracusan Dromio says, in "Tartar limbo" (4.2.32). The phrase combines places of confinement in pagan and Christian mythology.[63] The Officer who arrested him appears as a "devil" in Dromio's metaphor, wearing "an everlasting garment" (33), "a suit of buff" (45), which refers to "the leather […] uniform of an Elizabethan officer of the law," according to Dolan (33n). Adriana enquires if her businessman husband has been "arrested on a band," that is, a "bond" (49 and n), which the slave takes to mean a strap.[64]

The Syracusan Dromio then carries this "running joke" (4.3.18n) over to his dialogue with his own master he wants to bail out by mistake, and includes in it a reference to the parable of the Prodigal Son. By leaving his father five years earlier, the Syracusan traveler seems to have attempted to rouse him from an inertia and provoke him into enacting a version of the Biblical

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[63] "Limbo properly is a benign Christian place in hell for unbaptized infants; 'Tartar' combines this with a pagan place of punishment." Frances E. Dolan, ed., *The Comedy of Errors*, by William Shakespeare, The Pelican Shakespeare Ser. (New York: Penguin Books, 1999) 4.2.32n.

[64] Joseph Ritson denies the significance of the pun. For him, "Adriana means a *written band*, and Dromio quibbles upon a *hempen one*." He cannot admit "any such allusion" because, he says, "there would be very little humour in it." *Remarks, Critical and Illustrative, on the Text and Notes of the Last Edition of Shakespeare* (London, 1783) 27, 26. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, 17 June 2014.

story. Dromio now picks up a detail that is irrelevant to the original meaning of Jesus' parable, the value of a lost soul recovered from sin, and includes it in his travesty of it: the prison guard wears "the calf's skin," he says, "that was killed for the Prodigal" (4.3.17f). With this, he tries to remind his Syracusan master of the arrest that he thinks he underwent and, possibly, and more importantly, of the purpose and meaning of his own adventure. Compared to the freedom of the moment when he set sail from Sicily with an unknown destination, the Syracusan twin is now indeed in a situation similar to the one in which inmates who wear "suits of durance" (26) find themselves. His own choices, his repeated acts of avoidance, were leading him on a way that has by now diminished his options. Is his Dromio intimating that he has neglected restoring old family relations, as well as establishing new ones, as a context for his sense of identity? Does his reference to "the calf's skin" mean that the Syracusan master may have forgotten what was at stake in his voyage were? The way "Adam that keeps the prison" (4.3.17) and "goes in the calf's skin" (17f) has nothing to do anymore with the "compassion"[65] that urged the father to kill the calf in the first place would be similar to the loss of purpose in Antipholus of Syracuse. How could the Syracusan son forget about his original intention with which he set out when he "became inquisitive / After his brother" (1.1.125f)? He compared himself in the first Act to a "drop of water / That in the ocean seeks another drop" (1.2.35f); but then, in the second Act, he ignores his own "computation and mine host's report" that tell him he "could not speak with Dromio" (2.1.4f) when he thought he did. The evidence indicates he has reached his destination, but he disregards it and says he wants to flee Ephesus, which he then never does.

Dromio's attempt "to whet" the Syracusan traveler's "almost blunted purpose"[66] provides us with an opportunity to sum up the story of his master's evasions up to the end of the fourth Act. Once he first hears about a housewife that expects her husband, who must obviously look like him

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[65] Luke 15:10.
[66] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, *The Norton Shakespeare*. *Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York, London: W W Norton, 1997) 1668–1756. 3.4.101.

and bear the same name, for dinner, he expresses his desire to leave Ephesus (1.2.103). However, when he meets the wife, Adriana, in person, he decides to go "at all adventures" (2.2.214), but particularly "to dine above" (206) with her, while her husband is away. He even orders his slave to secure the gate and "let none enter" (217), in case the husband should return in the meantime. When the wife's sister, Luciana, upbraids him for not fulfilling a "husband's office" (3.2.2) with Adriana, Antipholus of Syracuse begins to passionately woo the sister, who refuses him in consternation. He vents his frustration in humiliating a kitchen wench and decides, once again, not to "harbor in this town" (3.2.148) for another night. The goldsmith takes our Antipholus for a local customer of the same name and entrusts a precious jewel to him indicating that it was made for his wife. The Syracusan takes it as a gift for himself and prepares to sail "straight away" (183, 185). After his slave reminds him of the story of the Prodigal Son, he refuses to part with the chain for the sake of a Courtesan, even though he finds out that a man like him was recently arrested and his slave has "the angels […] to deliver" (4.3.38) him. He calls the Courtesan "a sorceress" (4.3.64) and, with his rapier drawn, chases her, Adriana, Luciana, and an officer away. Again, he is ready to "fetch our stuff" (4.4.151) from the Centaur and board the first vessel that leaves the harbor.

None of the above activities serves the aim of establishing a relationship with the sibling of whom the Syracusan cannot have retained conscious memories. However, they effectively undermine the Ephesian businessman's position and ruin his reputation. Soon after his slave accuses him of abusive behavior and of demanding money of him (3.1.6–9), Antipholus of Ephesus has to endure the humiliation of being locked out of his own house with his guest, a fellow merchant, and having to "depart in quiet" (107). In Act four, his goldsmith has him arrested in the street for refusing to pay for a "carcanet"[67] he has never received. He sends the wrong Dromio home for money to bail him out, but his own slave returns with "a rope's end" (4.4.16) instead. His wife, his sister-in-law, and the Courtesan diagnose him as "mad" (46); and since his experience

[67] "a necklace of gold or set with jewels" (3.1.4n).

concerning the dinner and the payment does not match with theirs, Adriana orders Dr. Pinch, the conjurer, and other attendants to "bind him" (107). Now, even when he "*strives*" (106 SD), he might save himself from the humiliation of being "bound and laid in some dark room" (95) only by going to prison instead (110–112)—but he "*strives*" in vain. He will be locked up where he was locked out from: his own house (123f). His wife, who has been yearning for his "look" and his "touch" (2.1.88, 111), now does "not" let him "come near me" (4.4.107). The career of a businessman of a "very reverend reputation" and of "credit infinite, highly beloved" (5.1.5f) ends, as the Ephesian himself formulates, in "deep shames and great indignities" (254) when the Doctor leads him away, bound, through the streets of Ephesus. His Syracusan brother could not have done all this to him, if he had remained a diffuse self seeking other selves to merge with or trying to fill the frame of his brother's public persona with an empathetic self. To effect his ruin, the Syracusan had to steal outright the Ephesian's public persona, wear it, and excuse himself by saying he would only "entertain the offered fallacy" (2.2.185).

Soon after he received the first sign of his brother's presence in Ephesus, the Syracusan imposed on himself a narrow perceptual horizon. In fact, he obeyed an impulse to emulate his brother and replicate his isolation in a way hauntingly similar to how "solemn synods" have "decreed" (1.1.13) in Ephesus that the city would cut off its "well-dealing" (1.1.7) merchants from an exchange with Syracuse, from whose duke the "enmity and discord" allegedly "Sprung" (5f). Moreover, by destroying his brother's fragile "credit" and "reputation" (4.1.68, 71; 5.1.5f) in a city dominated by commerce and governed by "law" (4.1.83), where an apparent infringement can reduce a "yet ungallèd estimation" (3.1.102) to "notorious shame" (4.1.84), the Syracusan gives vent to a kind of suppressed anger that also animates the elder brother in the Prodigal Son story.[68] The Syracusan son acts out his envy of the other's freedom to live his own life, while he, as the elder brother in Jesus' parable says of himself, has served his father "these many years" without ever

[68] Luke 15:28.

breaking his "commandment" (15:29). Seeing the reward of an independent existence and material success Antipholus of Ephesus has reaped for separating early from the family, the Syracusan twin cannot resist taking his brother's "offered" place and sample the delights of the life of an adult. When he "entertain[s]" a "dream" (2.2.185, 181) of being married and enters his brother's house as if it was "fairyland" (188), he acts upon a pang of resentment that overwhelms the Prodigal's brother coming home from the field and hearing the "melodie, and dancing"[69] from the house: the awareness of the difference between their lots becomes suddenly unbearable and demands immediate reparation.

9. Conclusion

Although purportedly he is on a mission to find members of his family, Antipholus of Syracuse is, at the same time, in search of his identity. As it appears, the two goals are not compatible. The fact that, as a son of his father, Egeon, the Syracusan cannot surmount the consequences of his namelessness condemns him to a state of invisibility in the family, behind his socially successful brother's persona. As a result, paradoxically, he has to lose himself to be reunited with the family and incorporated in his new home, the city of Ephesus. In the course of his preparation for this rebirth (5.1.405, 407), the Syracusan brother suspends the normal functioning of his perception and refuses to accept the possibility that one name may refer to two identities. By conspicuously avoiding the realization that his brother is near, he creates the impression in the audience that having an identical double is an improbable, fearful possibility. His behavior results from his submission to the power of language and its paternal origin. As a result, he eliminates his own freedom of action. In this paralysis, his attempts to develop an emotional attachment to either of the sisters, Adriana or Luciana, is arrested on a level of experimentation. Antipholus of Syracuse

[69] Luke 15:25.

accepts his incorporation in the Christian family under the auspices of his mother, the abbess, at the price that his alienation, a loss of his self, becomes permanent.

Chapter 3

Doctor Faustus and the Promise of Magic

Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* presents us with the heroic effort of the protagonist, an accomplished scholar, to find personal fulfillment in transcendental consciousness. Faustus's skills to employ language and perception in realizing his desire do not match his enthusiasm to acquire knowledge of, and power over, the material universe. The kind of discourse he learns in his interaction with diabolical forces limits his perception, and he constructs a simplified view of the world that does not allow him to act in it in a meaningful way. As a result, his sense of identity becomes rather stifled than fragmented. He retains his desire to experience the richness of his reality, but he cannot make the discourse that interprets it for him in the framework of theology his own. He resorts to magic as a way of understanding the world that originates outside this frame of reference, but the diabolical forces he conjures do not lead him beyond the kind of meaning-making that a restrictive Protestant view can offer.

The criticism on Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* since World War II starts from a strictly Christian theological basis and a judgmental attitude about Faustus and gradually opens up the framework of interpretation to alternative world views contemporary with Marlowe. This change might bring us closer to an explanation of the contradiction in the doctor's attitude: he refuses to participate in the Christian salvation plan while, at the same time, he cannot give up hope to win divine grace. The earlier critics, for example Paul Harold Kocher and Douglas Cole, view Faustus from the perspective of God the benevolent Father, whose role Marlowe certainly implies in the prevalent Christian world view. We must not identify the shape of the dramatic world of Faustus uncritically with what appears to be the dominant ideology of the period in England based on Protestant theological treatises. Therefore, including an approach to living in the world and to

shaping one's own identity in relation to it in tension with Protestant Christianity may yield a more complete understanding of Faustus's motives.

In Marlowe's play, a pagan, experiential, sensual, occult, and holistic view contends with a Christian, spiritual, and discursive[1] approach that compartmentalizes phenomena and isolates Faustus from his natural environment.[2] The former corresponds to viewing and experiencing the world primarily through our own eyes, while the latter results from assuming an alienating perspective outside and above us. These considerations, I hope, justify my choice of *Doctor Faustus* to elaborate on the theme of integrity and identity in Renaissance/early modern English drama.

Paul Harold Kocher finds the theological meaning of Christopher Marlowe's play epitomized in the Old Man's image of an angel offering "a vial full of precious grace"[3] to Faustus, who needs only to open up his soul in a "call for mercy" to "avoid despair."[4] Kocher emphasizes Faustus's unhampered free will (108) and argues that his refusal of divine grace is the result of a conscious decision (110). The scholar is unable to repent, Kocher adds, because he has hardened his own heart (111), and so cannot believe he can be saved. It is all a matter of trying, but he fails to make an effort (112). Kocher points out that Marlowe presents Faustus's struggle in an authentic theological framework that squares with Christian doctrine (105–6, 114), and that his poetry serves the aim of "authoritatively" condemning Faustus's ambitions, already in the first act, as evil (115–16). The only weakness Kocher identifies in the tragedy is that Marlowe fails to persuade us that God is

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[1] Catherine Belsey distinguishes between discursive and empirical knowledge thus: "In the problematic of discursive knowledge understanding is a preparation for the dissolution of the self. It is empirical knowledge which promises dominion." "Doctor Faustus and Knowledge in Conflict," *Marlowe: Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. Avraham Oz (Houndmills, Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) 163–71. 170.
[2] C. L. Barber points out that "Faustus must try to leap up [to heaven] by himself, without the aid of Grace. His focus on the one drop, half a drop, that he feels would save his soul, expresses the Reformation's tendency to isolate the individual in his act of communion." "The Form of Faustus's Fortunes Good or Bad," *Faust: Sources, Works, Criticism*, ed. Paul A. Bates (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1969) 157–171. 159.
[3] Paul H. Kocher, *Christopher Marlowe. A Study of his Thought, Learning, and Character* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1946) 108.
[4] Christopher Marlowe, *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, *Doctor Faustus: A 1604-Version Edition*, ed. Michael Keefer (1991; Peterborough, Ontario, Canada; Plymouth, UK: Broadview, 2007) 71–171. 5.1.56. All references are to this edition, unless otherwise noted.

"truly a Father who looks with tenderness on his erring children of the earth." This omission has no dramatic function in the plot, he claims, and it issues merely from "some coldness in the poet's own religious temperament" (118). Kocher identifies the reason for Faustus's fall in his "sins of pride, curiosity, and ambition" (105), which, in turn, he derives from original sin (106).

In his analysis of the play, Douglas Cole acknowledges a context for Faustus's actions outside the Christian world view and theological tradition but fails to include it in his explanation of the hero's motives. He sees Faustus's obstinacy and denial of "the message of redemption"[5] as part of "the mythic pattern of the forbidden quest for superhuman knowledge and power" (233). In his analysis, he incorporates Robert B. Heilman's view that Faustus "embodies a perennial human aspiration—to escape inhibitions, to control the universe, to reconstruct the cosmos in naturalistic, non-theistic terms."[6] Although Cole admits that the dramatist took a "fundamental pattern of human experience" (234) as his raw material, he still insists that Faustus's sin is linked to the "original sin of Christian theology" and that Marlowe presents the hero's "moral choice" in this context (194). Consequently, Faustus's tragedy is "a spiritual one" (231), and it issues from his sin of a willful reversal (192, 231). He sins "in the perversity of his will and intellect," which torments his spirit (225). Cole analyzes the play consistently in terms of Faustus's "self-imposed blindness" (199) and willful perversion of the Scriptures (198), which make him "in his aspiration to be as God," choose "the not-God" (201). This perversion reaches its completion when God's justice takes the place of his mercy, which Faustus has knowingly rejected (227). In spite of admitting the legitimacy of "naturalistic, non-theistic" notions in a philosophical context, Cole seems to insist that his "humanity" is a mere "burden" and the "root of […] suffering" (242) for Faustus, while his only

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[5] Douglas Cole, *Suffering and Evil in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962) 227.
[6] Robert Bertold Heilman, "The Tragedy of Knowledge: Marlowe's Treatment of Faustus," *Quarterly Review of Literature*, (1946): 316–332. Qtd. in Cole 234.

reality is the spiritual light of salvation (199). Independent of the author's own attitude to religion, the play is "thoroughly Christian in conception and import" (194).

To refute critics who might sense a discrepancy between the theological status and the received negative moral judgment of Faustus's position, on the one hand, and Marlowe's sympathetic treatment of the character, on the other, Judith Weil argues that Marlowe allows Faustus to impress audiences with his magic and with his worship of "beauty, power and fame"[7] only to hide his "folly" behind a "heroic dimension" (50) and then "laugh[…] contemptuously" (57) at his "learned folly," his "ridiculous blindness" (60), and the "wilful ignorance" that leads him to vice (59). Marlowe, she says, prompts our compassion for Faustus, a "damned hero," by giving him "extraordinarily fine lines" (73) only to have them "subtly expose[…] him" (74). The "central irony" of the play is, she says, that before he takes to magic, Faustus must have lost his "wisdom" or at least that part of it that concerns divine matters (52). As a result of an "aberration of the will," Weil contends, "Faustus has abused his will" (53) or "gorged himself on the wrong kind of wisdom" (61). His senses (55) cannot distinguish clearly between opposites like "Heaven" and "necromancy," "Elysium" and "Hell" (54), and so he foolishly believes that the "merciful God" of St. Paul is his enemy (61). Faustus founders on the conflict between "faith and reason" (80). His reason is vain without "wisdom and grace" (80). Although God might not have bestowed "the essential wisdom of the heart" (52, 70, 75), that is, grace, on Faustus, Marlowe makes sure that he has plenty of opportunities to repent (52). Surprisingly, Weil concludes that Faustus's wisdom is "more humane and worldly than that defined by St. Paul or Augustine," by suggesting that such qualities might have value in contrast to a legalized and politically saturated theology. However, she argues, in his folly Faustus inverts this worldly humanity, too, and parodies it by neglecting its substance for mere show (80). Marlowe allows him to "achieve an intellectual perception of God" (75) and theological understanding (76) which, however, do not help him overcome the foolishness of his

[7] Judith Weil, *Christopher Marlowe: Merlin's Prophet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) 51.

heart and repent (75). Although he knows he is a sinner, he cannot be saved, since he does not believe in salvation (76f). Weil sets faith in a hierarchical relationship above reason and suggests that Faustus's inability to attain it locks him in a tragic paradox.

Hilary Gatti moves decisively beyond the religious-theological framework to understand Faustus's resistance to it. She explains magic in Marlowe as a reaction against a rationalistic, scientific way to learn about the world.[8] Opposed to a "dogmatic religious" (84) approach, the most prominent representative in Europe of an alternative at the time, Giordano Bruno, shares with Marlowe a philosophical, directly human, and poetic (75, 77) endeavor to understand nature and the universe and to imitate their workings (81). To be able to imitate nature, one certainly has to be like it and to acknowledge a common ground with it. According to this concept, nature itself would justify the inquisitive mind of man who would be seeing her through his own eyes, unrestrained by his position as being created and having to be saved by the Christian God (87). This view opposes the "book of nature" to the Scriptures (97); and, instead of elevating him or her "beyond an obscure, phenomenal natural world," it posits the subject in direct contact with it (98). Gatti points out that Faustus would prefer "a more empirical astronomy" to the "ten-(or in some cases eleven- or twelve-) sphere universe" prevalent in his time (101). Gatti explains Faustus's failure to mention divine mercy in St. Paul and St. John, on this basis, as a deliberate choice. Faustus denies the "concept of death in terms of rewards and punishments,"[9] refuses his dependence on an arbitrary "act of mercy on the part of God," and he tries to avoid thinking of "the possibility of everlasting torment" (92).[10] In this analysis, the play emerges as a "human rather than supernatural or demonic experience" (98) or a "theological" or "spiritual" drama as it appeared to be in Kocher's and in Cole's analysis

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[8] Hilary Gatti, *The Renaissance Drama of Knowledge. Giordano Bruno in England* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989) 74.

[9] An opinion which Weil understands Faustus is implying (56).

[10] While a combination of religious and national sentiments affected popular thinking during the late fourteenth century, statements often cropped up in England, France, and Bohemia asserting the empowerment of laymen to administer the sacraments and denying the importance of priests, of the Roman Church, and of the existence of hell, because it was alien to nature. Walter Ullmann, *Medieval Foundations of Renaissance Humanism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977) 193.

respectively. The play's irony for Gatti is that having accepted an alternative way of seeing and knowing, Faustus "can no longer be saved in Christian terms;" and still he cannot escape death (and the fear of it, (109)), according to the Protestant Christianity of the world he lives in (108).

Instead of demanding that Faustus restore the perverted relationship in his contorted perception between God and his adversary, Alan Sinfield completes a reversal in the traditional approach of measuring Faustus against the context of Christian theology. For him, the play gives rise to "a moral perspective alternative to God's."[11] Sinfield resists the urge to fill in with Biblical and theological references the role and image of an absent God that Marlowe has left blank in the script. Kocher, Cole, and Weil use the "default reasoning"[12] described in the theory of how we interpret utterances; that is, they assume that no context-dependent inference is required to understand *Doctor Faustus* beyond what the author himself has included in the text of the play. Weil even elevates theology to the level of the framework of the play. Gatti, in contrast, moves beyond the theological framework and, following Marlowe's personal and intellectual connections, includes references to an alternative world view to explain Faustus's refusal to participate in the Christian salvation plan. Instead of looking at Faustus through the invisible eye of God, Sinfield rather examines contemporary Protestant theology from Faustus's point of view.

According to Sinfield, Faustus finds himself, in the context of Protestant theology, in an untenable position. Martin Luther,[13] John Calvin, William Tyndale, and, in their wake, Elizabethan orthodoxy deprived the individual of his or her power to effectuate or deserve his or her own salvation (173f). Under such conditions, the Good Angel and the Old Man still encourage Faustus to implore Christ to save him.[14] Urging believers to repent and rendering their religious fervor

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[11] Alan Sinfield, "Reading Faustus's God," *Marlowe: Contemporary Critical Essays,* ed. Avraham Oz (Houndmills, Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) 172–181. 176.
[12] Kent Bach, "Default Reasoning: Jumping to Conclusions and Knowing When to Think Twice," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 65.1 (1984): 37–58.
[13] Sinfield 175.
[14] Sinfield quotes Faustus's words calling Christ his savior and imploring him to save him: A-text 2.3.79f, B-text 2.3.83f.

ineffectual at the same time might indeed bring on the despair which Kocher and Cole observe in Faustus. In Sinfield's analysis, the contradiction between faith and reason in Faustus characterizes the entire theological field he acts in, because it separates faith entirely from reason, oppressing adherents by making unreasonable demands on their faith. The Protestant Reformation in England adopts the doctrine of predestination. In response to this, Sinfield argues, the play intends to "embarrass" this ideological practice (177) and the Protestant God (178) rather than Faustus, who cannot comply with its stricture and who still shows a humane heart in his dire plight (179).

1. Rising above Direct Experience

In his opening soliloquy, Doctor Faustus leaves his direct involvement with worldly activities and detaches himself from the history of his previous experience. This detachment has a linguistic and a perceptual aspect: it finds expression in the rhetorical device of self-address, which corresponds to an outside, transcendental viewpoint in the observation of an image of which he himself is a part. In this effort to rise above his self in a discursive construct, Faustus prepares to assume a divine perspective in anticipation of a direct, personal, and active involvement with the salvation of his soul.

In his struggle to define his own identity, Faustus is torn between two contesting viewpoints: one is outside of him and incorporeal, while the other is that of his own bodily eyes. From both, he appears to himself as a worldly, mortal being sharing a bodily existence limited in time and space with fellow humans and other living beings and even with earthly and celestial objects. The former, incorporeal viewpoint, however, represents for him the surrounding universe as immutable, his existence in it as insufficient, and urges him to transcend it and rise in status above other living creatures. This view dominated the earlier criticism of the play, prompting a prescriptive, judgmental attitude. The latter, experiential view, on the other hand, encourages Faustus to acknowledge himself as a part of this world of the senses, to understand the intricate

ways in which he is entangled with the world, the forces that animate it, and the laws that govern it. Furthermore, the experiential view urges him to take possession of this world: it promises to empower him to shape his relationship to the world of the senses, to mold the face of the world along its own knowable principles, and to evolve in the process, through his own effort, into its creator. The experiential way of Faustus's self-understanding gains more acceptance in recent criticism of *Doctor Faustus*, and I intend my contribution to support this tradition by elaborating on the contrast between the two images of his identity that arise in Faustus in the framework of the two viewpoints: the incorporeal and the experiential.

His use of language in the opening soliloquy shows a split between two speaking personae, as if he were representing his own train of thought in a dramatized fashion, in a dialogue between himself and an outside observer.[15] He tends to give himself instructions on what to do next in the second person, as if from the perspective of an interlocutor, and to report on his own experience in the first. For example, he tells himself as if in a foreign voice to "live and die in Aristotle's works," and then responds to the injunction saying, "Sweet *Analytics*, 'tis thou hast ravished me" (1.1.5–6). He mixes an outside perspective on himself with a direct view of a familiar object from his own point of view. The distanced observer then tells him to drop the object with which he has been occupied on account of the restrictive nature of the pursuit: "Is to dispute well logic's chiefest end? / Affords this art no greater miracle? / Then read no more" (8–10). He addresses Galen, as he did Aristotle, showing he is on intimate terms with his thought, saying, "Galen come." Then, in the voice of an impatient tutor, he reproaches himself for having attained the "end of physic," that is, "our bodies' health" and for being "still but Faustus, and a man" (12, 17, 23). It is not easy to decide where Faustus stands. As Belsey suggests, in Faustus's speech the "subject of the enunciation," that

[15] Dollimore calls Faustus here "almost schizoid" (113). "On some occasions," he says, Faustus is a soul that "fluctuates between contrary wills" in St Augustine's terms. In terms of a Manichean "universal conflict," however, he is "divided and, indeed, constituted by that division" (116).

is, the speaker, "exceeds the subject of the utterance."[16] Does he enjoy reading his "Sweet *Analytics*" and "to dispute well" (6, 8)? Does he value his own endeavor as a physician to begin where "the philosopher leaves off" and to ease a "thousand desperate maladies" (13n, 22)? Or does he rather identify with the voice that interrupts his reading and belittles his achievement as a savior of lives?[17]

However, by the time he reaches his third profession as a lawyer, he seems to have made up his mind: he does not call Justinian with the familiarity he accorded to Aristotle and to Galen. "[W]here is Justinian?" (27), he demands impatiently, and discredits the discipline the Byzantine author of *Corpus Juris Civilis* stands for, in contrast to the previous two cases, without embodying an outside voice, finally dismissing it in the first person: "This study fits a mercenary drudge / Who aims at nothing but external trash— / Too servile and illiberal for me" (34–36). The tendency we have observed here is both linguistic and perceptual. The first and the second person pronouns, "me" and "thou," invoke two different visual perspectives: the voice that refers to him as "me" looks at an object of study or an activity, and the one that addresses him as "thou" sees, instead, the student or practitioner in relation to that object. "Thou" indicates a detached perspective and a voice impatient with the focused attention of the addressee, who loses himself enthusiastically in each field in the beginning, but gradually yields to the perspective of the speaker and finally finds fault with his own fervor with a profession that deals only with everyday human affairs. Faustus—the student, the physician, and the lawyer—works in close contact with his fellow human beings, and with ancient authors who evoke emotions of compassion and excitement in him. By the end of

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[16] Belsey 50, 52.

[17] The facts that, in contrast to the "conventional employment of abstract or metaphorical figures in the morality plays," "Faustus never directs his attention to the Good and Evil Angels as dramatic entities," that "he neither speaks directly to them nor shows any sensible awareness of their physical presence," and that they "never appear except in the presence of the human protagonist" further strengthen Marlowe's concentration on the internal conflict of Faustus's mind. Unlike the human heroes of the morality tradition, Faustus is "never separated from the conflict" between the allegorical figures of good and evil. "The moral forces and principles that were once abstracted from man's nature and presented separately as external agents are now within his own being. The battle between good and evil is fought in Faustus's own mind" (Cole 234–35, 237, 242).

the "dialogue" with himself, however, he seems disappointed with these feelings of empathy and senses them as a weakness.

This initial "dialogic" monologue serves as an exposition that continues the "Prologue" and, at the same time, brings Faustus's relationship to his work and studies into focus and effectively sums up his history. It also reads and sounds like a dramatized summary of Faustus's previous experience. Faustus here acts out his memory of his life up to the point where the plot begins. Memory, it seems, tends to alienate us from our own point of view, so that with time we give up our first-person perspective and see our past selves from the outside, as if through somebody else's eyes. Charles Fernyhough, author of a recent study on how we retell our stories from the past,[18] recalls his first memory as a child, not as a direct experience seen from his own point of view, but rather from a peculiarly detached perspective. "I'm on the floor of the living room in the house where I lived at the time," he begins.

> And I've got this toy forklift truck, and I'm pushing this thing across the carpet. There's something really strange about this memory – it's vivid, I can imagine the quality of the light, something of the atmosphere in the room. But I'm looking at myself in the third person. I'm not looking out at the room through my own eyes. I'm looking at myself as a kid in this memory. And that is one of the most puzzling things about particularly early memories,[19]

Fernyhough generalizes. "Sometimes we see ourselves in our memories as people in the third person – we don't look out through our own eyes," he adds. His answer to the question why we often remember past events from an outside perspective is that "memories are not literal representations of the past as it happened," but rather "they're shaped by who we are now. They're

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[18] Charles Fernyhough, *Pieces of Light*: *How the New Science of Memory Illuminates the Stories we Tell about our Pasts* (New York: HarperCollins, 2013).
[19] NPR Staff, "Reminder: Our Memories Are Less Reliable Than We Think," *NPR: Books*, *NPR.org*, 13 Mar. 2013. 24 Dec. 2013.

shaped by what we feel, what we believe, what our biases are."[20] Memory, in short, involves a change in perspective, which we achieve over time. When Faustus retells his own story, he reenacts this shift from direct experience to conscious observation in front of the audience.

Fernyhough's explanation implies that we record past experiences first, when they are happening, from our own perspective, but later, before we recall and retell them, "[s]omething has flipped around. The perspective has changed."[21] However, our view of ourselves does not become alienated only with time; but, as Jacques Lacan argues, we form our very identity in the first place via a perspective that is not available to us directly.[22] Both the formation of identity and the way our relationship to objects changes contain an element of alienation.[23] In contrast to Peter Ramus's "logically articulated art of memory," Giordano Bruno's method attempts to reconnect the mind, through "a symbolic pattern of 'shadows' or 'signs'" to the "intimate structure of the universe."[24] In the *The Art of Memory*, Frances Yates calls this "one of the most basic of all Elizabethan controversies."[25]

Faustus, however, retells his experience as seen both from his own perspective and from that of an unnamed observer, so that each viewpoint represents a different kind of relationship to himself and a different quality of his being in the world. We are witnessing here Faustus's transition from an unreflected consciousness and a direct connection to objects at the second level, to "consciousness of consciousness," that is, to an awareness of his own relationship to the objects of

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[20] NPR Staff, "Reminder."
[21] NPR Staff, "Reminder."
[22] See Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," trans. Alan Sheridan, *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, eds. Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer (New York, London: Longman, 1994) 382–86. 383.
[23] This alienation from our own selves empowers us to shape who we are in the sense of Pico della Mirandola: as if to compensate us for having given away all the particular characteristics before he decided to create man, "God the Father, the supreme Architect" endowed us with the "joint possession of whatever had been peculiar to each of the different kinds of being." So, he told man, the product of an afterthought, to "fashion thyself in whatever shape thou shalt prefer." Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, "Oration on the Dignity of Man," trans. Elizabeth Livermore Forbes, *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man,* eds. Ernst Cassirer et al. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948). 223–54. 224–25.
[24] Gatti 95.
[25] Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966) 266.

his occupation. This transition is "accompanied by the intrusion of language, by the rise of objects, and by the fragmentation of reality," and it epitomizes in miniature (and foreshadows) Faustus's struggle for an awareness of the relations that connect language to reality and objects to his senses, while he tries to maintain his control over these relations. According to Jewel Spears Brooker and Joseph Bentley, T. S. Eliot "often refers to the first level as feeling, the second as thought" (39). Before Faustus arrives at his discussion of the tenet of salvation in the New Testament, he has broken away from a direct identification with the study of dialectic and with the practice of medicine and law. He has detached himself from his worldly affairs and is ready to assume a new, incorporeal identity, resembling the protagonist in the morality tradition.

2. The Moment of Hesitation

The condition for salvation is a complete trust in divine grace. By omitting passages in the New Testament, Faustus refuses even to acknowledge that this requirement is codified in Scripture. He has embarked on an imaginary journey toward a disembodied, transcendental existence, when he realizes he is not able to accept this condition, this textual, doctrinal constraint on his freedom to shape his view of himself. The hope that in a rhetorical distance to himself he will be able to actively determine his fate does not seem to materialize.

The crucial moment of Faustus's transformation of identity occurs when he confronts the words of St. Paul and St. John the Evangelist and Apostle, in reading what he calls "Jerome's Bible."[26] On the one hand, Faustus seems to set himself up for a painful surprise, while, on the other, he has secured himself mentally against it. From worldly occupations, he turns to divinity hoping it would be "best" (1.1.37), only to find, upon a closer examination of scripture, self-annihilation as the "hard" (40) precondition for salvation. Nonetheless, he does so only after he has determined to "be

[26] According to the editor, Marlowe probably uses his own "back-translation from English texts:" the Geneva Bible from 1560 and *The Book of Common Prayer*. 1.1.38n.

a divine" merely "in show" (3), so that the hypocritical garb of a professional interpreter might protect him against the edge of the theological doctrine, even if it still leaves him vulnerable to it as a person. His self-imposed injunctions[27] in the opening soliloquy sound spontaneous, but his deliberations follow the structure of a university disputation exercise *in utramque partem*, that is, on both sides of the argument, and he sums up in them not his reaction to a recent event, but the experience of a lifetime in the study of logic and in the practice of medicine and jurisprudence. He starts from Aristotelian logic and the kind of formalized disputation the constraints of which he would like to leave behind but still observes throughout this soliloquy itself, and ends up with the study of theology which he, in spite of his determination to consider it a mere "show," unexpectedly takes to heart.

Faustus's wish to protect himself and hide behind false pretenses, behind the texts of antiquity and highly formalized ways of expression is itself half-hearted and affected. While he depends on the language of both the Scripture and magical texts, he struggles with the limitations of those texts. Working his way through his discussion of the practices of logic, medicine, and law, he reenacts the way he exposed himself to all the branches of learning and now rejects them one by one for bestowing on him a certain, but limiting, identity. This, in turn, suggests that he is in search of an occupation that will allow him to rise above such earthly constraints as the company of fellow disputants (1.1.7), the "desperate maladies" (22) of the human body, and the ungenerous arguments about "external trash" (35) between father and son. He complains about being not more than those who enjoy these or suffer from them, about being "still but Faustus, and a man" (23). Gatti formulates a sense of suspense at this moment in the play saying that it "is only when this sense of man as free to achieve for himself, through his own intellectual impetus, an almost divine status has already been hinted at that Faustus reaches, in the central verses of his monologue, the

[27] "Settle thy studies Faustus, and begin / To sound the depth of that thou wilt profess" (1.1.1–2), "live and die in Aristotle's works" (5), etc.

hard kernel of his problem: his studies of divinity."[28] When he finally encounters the question of salvation, a theological tenet that offers him a vista of personal, transcendental self-realization,[29] we would expect him to embrace it and make it his immediate goal to reach it, as does the Redcrosse Knight upon his sight of "new *Hierusalem*"[30] in *The Faerie Queene*, first printed in 1590,[31] around the time Marlowe was composing *Doctor Faustus*.[32] Nonetheless, St. Paul's and St. John's words touch him in a way he cannot cope with. He cannot even reach the promise of "eternal life" and the "forgiue[ness of] our sinnes"[33] in his reading of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans and St. John's First Epistle, respectively, but stops in St. Paul at the clause foreseeing the punishment of adherents for their sins and couples with this John's statement forestalling claims of exemption from impurity.

Above, I quoted Gatti on Faustus's reasons to refuse the "Christian solution to the drastic conclusion to the syllogism"[34] the Doctor builds by selecting the first halves of two statements and omitting the second halves. The "possibility of everlasting torment" and the complete dependence "on an act of mercy," Gatti points out, are themselves, however, the result of a process of reduction. To follow the tradition that Heilman inaugurated, Cole acknowledged, even Weil partially admitted, that Gatti brought to fruition, and Sinfield drew further conclusions from, I will search for archetypes of the "perennial human aspiration […] to reconstruct the cosmos in naturalistic, non-

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[28] Gatti 91.
[29] Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual 1050–1200*, Church History Outlines Ser. (London: SPCK, 1972) 147–49.
[30] The Redcrosse Knight says, "O let me not (quoth he) then turne againe / Backe to the world, whose ioyes so fruitlesse are; / But let me here for aye in peace remaine, / Or straight way on that last long voyage fare, / That nothing may my present hope empire." Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. Thomas P. Roche, Jr. (London: Penguin, 1978) I X 57, 63.
[31] Thomas P. Roche, Jr, "Introduction," *The Faerie Queene* by Edmund Spenser, ed. Thomas P. Roche (London: Penguin, 1978) 10.
[32] David Bevington dates Marlowe's tragedy to the late 1580s. "Introduction to *Doctor Faustus*," *English Renaissance Drama. A Norton Anthology*, eds. David Bevington et al. (New York, London: W. W. Norton, 2002) 245–49. 245. Gatti refers to a consensus among historians that it was "probably written only shortly before [Marlowe's] death in […] 1593" (74).
[33] William Whittingham, *The Bible and Holy Scriptures Conteyned in the Olde and Newe Testament* (Geneva: Rouland Hall, 1560) "To the Romans" 6:23. The First Epistle General of Iohn 1:8–9. Reel position STC 1019 / 06. Images 568 even page and 607 even page. *Early English Books Online*. 26 Dec. 2013.
[34] "[F]irst of all," Gatti argues, "because its concept of death in terms of rewards and punishments leaves open the possibility of everlasting torment; and second because it develops a doctrine which leaves man dependent for his salvation on an act of mercy on the part of God" (92).

theistic terms,"[35] because it seems such an ambition lies behind Faustus's refusal of the Christian salvation plan as well as behind the magic he turns to. It is difficult to clearly keep apart two notions: one is a trial the individual has to endure to reach self-realization, and the other is the experience of death—both are a one-shot affair. While Marlowe focuses Faustus's initial soliloquy on the former and his concluding one on the latter, the Doctor cannot complete his initiation as a Christian in the first scene because he does not accept the conditions of his death which, we have all reason to assume, takes place in the final scene. This complicates our perception of Faustus's death and makes its actual nature dependent on the status of Faustus's identity as a Christian, which is highly questionable. Therefore, the connections between the notions of initiation and death in *Doctor Faustus* are intricate and would require a separate study.[36]

Studying and comparing the most diverse mythologies, religions, and folktales, Joseph Campbell assembles, in an archetypical pattern, the journey of the solitary hero. It begins, he claims, with a "call to adventure" heralding a serious undertaking, for example, "religious illumination."[37] Mystics, he writes, quoting Evelyn Underhill, refer to this as "the awakening of the self."[38] Faustus's words in the first scene suggest, indeed, that, as Campbell formulates, the "familiar life horizon has

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[35] Heilman qtd. in Cole 234.

[36] Robert Ornstein indicates his sensitivity to the subtle problem of the status of Faustus's death: "Faustus makes his own personal hell of negation, a hell that 'hath no limits, nor is circumscrib'd / In one self place.' But he attempts to escape it in death by losing himself in the natural forces that were to have been his agents of creation." "The Comic Synthesis in *Doctor Faustus*," *Faust: Sources, Works, Criticism*, ed. Paul A. Bates (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1969) 150–153. 153. Faustus, it appears, does not die a death in the Christian sense, but rather, I would venture, a death in the sense of Lucretius. His prayer, "O soul, be changed into little water drops / And fall into the ocean, ne'er be found" (5.2.110f) recalls the poetic description of death in *De Rerum Natura* comparing the human soul to liquid flowing away: "that liquid, once its vessels are shattered, is dissipated and its moisture dispersed in all directions, and since mist and smoke disperse into the breezes, you must believe that the soul in turn drains away, perishes much more swiftly and dissolves more quickly into its original particles, once it has escaped and departed from a man's frame." Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, Book Three, trans. P. Michael Brown (Warminster, England: Aris & Phillips, 1997) 435–440. Gatti quotes this passage in a different translation adding that Giordano Bruno held on to a similar image "throughout his long trial" "to dismiss visions of death, both Platonic and Christian, which contemplated in an afterlife the judgment of the individual soul" (105–106). The connection between the passage from Lucretius and Faustus's dying words seems obvious.

[37] Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New World Library: Novato, CA, 2008) 42.

[38] Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism, A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1911), Part II, "The Mystic Way," Chapter II, "The Awakening of the Self." Qtd. in Campbell 42.

been outgrown; the old concepts, ideals, and emotional patterns no longer fit; the time for the passing of a threshold is at hand."[39]

And still, Faustus falters, and the call, instead of guiding him, deflects his intended trajectory. The mythologist's explanation of the refusal of the call casts some light on the consequences of Faustus's decision. The subject who turns away from the call generally "loses the power of significant affirmative action and becomes a victim to be saved," Campbell says.[40] He refers to Proverbs for support, to show that life for such a nonconformist "feels meaningless" (49) and, apparently, hopeless. "Because I haue called, and ye refused: I haue stretched out mine hand, and none wolde regarde," the Lord of the Old Testament says to the "fooles [who] despise wisdome & instruction," "I will also laugh at your destruction, *and* mocke, when your feare cometh. When your feare […] and your destruction shal come, […] Then shal they call vpon me, but I wil not answer."[41] Faustus's God refuses, indeed, to respond to his call in the last scene of the play, when his borrowed time on earth expires and Faustus is, not for the first time, in despair.

Although the "divinity itself" seems to become Faustus's "terror" and "the will of God" does turn into "a monster" for him, as Campbell characterizes the consequences the uncooperative hero must endure, it would be a narrow interpretation to assert that Faustus follows his own selfish interest[42] to make his "present system of ideals, virtues, goals, and advantages […] fixed and […] secure" (49–50). In contrast, Faustus is rather obsessed with the idea that he has to give himself away in the pursuit of a goal that is higher than him, even if he is unable to name that goal.[43] If he is

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[39] Campbell 43.
[40] Campbell 49.
[41] William Whittingham, *The Bible and Holy Scriptures Conteyned in the Olde and Newe Testament* (Geneva: Rouland Hall, 1560) Prouerbs 2:24, 7, 26–28. leafe 39, even page; 7:36–50, leafe 268 even page, 267 odd page. *Early English Books Online* 26 Dec. 2013.
[42] Campbell refers here to King Minos, who kept the bull sent to him by Poseidon instead of offering it to the god as a sacrifice (49).
[43] Both Christian and occult magical beliefs base their definitions of an ultimate personal goal on the realization of identity in an outside entity. In Christianity, this entity is a personal but immaterial presence, while in cabbala it is the impersonal and material but knowable world. Cole implies that in Christian theology the spirit achieves "meaning and fulfillment to its existence" in "God's presence." Faustus suffers, he claims,

"timorous" and "fails to make the passage through the door and come to birth in the world without" (52), as Campbell outlines the fate of the hero who refuses the call of coming of age, he immediately seeks a new "door," not so well respected, to be sure, but still in the hope that it would lead him to the same world "without," even if by doing so he risks his chance of being accepted in that world in Christian terms. In other words, magic and conjuration, in opposition to self-abnegation and the acknowledgment of God's grace, become a way for him to intensify and control his interaction with the material world. It is the task of this chapter to answer the question why Faustus cannot pass the door that seems to open for him in St. Paul's and St. John's words.

The only way for Faustus to reach independent adulthood in the Christian sense would be by overcoming his "terror" of passing through a "door" that threatens to trap him in utter helplessness before it may release him. Paradoxically, in the framework of Christian theology, adulthood would also mean that, to be saved, Faustus must willingly yield his control over his fate to a distant and unaccountable force. He has to decide, freely, to relinquish his freedom and not to try to influence his own fate.[44] That is, the concept of salvation demands that he make a choice, while the notion itself would not arise for Faustus and remain on his horizon throughout the plot if he had not made one already, that is, if he did not want to be saved. However, St. Paul and St. John make it a point to compel their readers to make a choice, through the promise of eternal happiness, in the framework of the Christian salvation plan. The fact that the reader is in the only framework

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exactly because "he has eternally separated himself from the only power that can fulfill and perfect his humanity" (192, 243). Kocher, in a similar vein, suggests that Marlowe himself had, at times, an awareness of having lost his chance to attain the "highest consummation" of his life when he grew estranged from the "religious instruction" of his childhood. On the other hand, according to Gatti, Guiordano Bruno emphasizes the cabbalist "mystical death of the soul," when the mind, in its search for knowledge, "dissolves itself in the object" (104). Gatti admits that "the ends [Faustus] is pursuing through" "the art 'Wherein all natures treasury is contained'" "are uncertainly defined" (97). The entity most of the heroes in the plays I analyze in this dissertation want to be a part of is larger than their selves: for Iago and Othello it is the idea of the City, while for Faustus it is that of the humanly knowable universe.

[44] Jonathan Dollimore characterizes Faustus's sin as "not the error of fallen judgment but a conscious and deliberate transgression of limit. It is a limit which, among other things, […] holds the individual subject terrifyingly responsible for the fallen human condition while disallowing him or her any subjective power of redemption." *Radical Tragedy*: *Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004) 115.

where the injunction to make this choice might make sense would indicate that the reader has already done so. The paradox arrests Faustus's progress toward an absolute freedom in self-determination.

3. The Turn to Forbidden Knowledge

As a result of the split in his subjecthood in his self-address and of the outside point of view he attempted to assume in self-observation, Faustus has now involuntarily submitted to a Scriptural definition of his identity. This deprives him of a freedom to define himself as a questioning, enquiring subject in search of a transcendental point of view he was striving for in his opening soliloquy. Nonetheless, the knowledge Faustus has acquired as a student and practitioner of logic, medicine, and law, while he still experienced the world directly from an experiential, unaffected point of view as Faustus, "a man" (1.1.23), might now be of service in an attempt to regain his integrity: to retain the authenticity of his desiring self and to attain, at the same time, a vantage point from which he could control his own view of the world. This is what the power of magic promises.

A constant sense of insufficiency justifies the individual's subjection in Protestant theology. Dollimore quotes Walzer when he argues that "The protestant God—'an arbitrary and wilful, omnipotent and universal tyrant' […]—demanded of each subject that s/he submit personally and without mediation."[45] As Calvin makes it clear in *The Institution of Christian Religion*, "our saluation floweth out of the fountaine of the free mercy of God [who] doth not without difference adopt all into the hope of saluation, but geueth to some that which he denyeth to other."[46] This doctrine is, Calvin adds, the most effective way "to humble us as we ought to be," and to compel us to "feele

[45] Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966) 151., qtd. in Dollimore 114.
[46] Dollimore 114.

from our hart how much we are bounde to God."[47] This does not mean only, as Dollimore explains, that the "modes of power formerly incorporated in mediating institutions and practices now devolve"[48] solely on the Protestant God, but also that God turns entirely unknowable and invisible. The "limit" that spurs Faustus to a "conscious and deliberate transgression" "renders God remote and inscrutable yet subjects the individual to constant surveillance and correction" (115). He who would enquire into God's foreknowledge, Calvin declares,

> shall both not attaine wherewith to satisfie his curiousnesse, and he shal enter into a mase whereof he shal finde no way to get out againe. For neither is it mete that man should freely search those thinges which God hath willed to be hidden in himselfe, and to turne ouer from very eternitie the height of wisdom, which he willed to be honored and not be conceiued, that by it also he mought be meruailous unto us.[49]

This renders the adherent blind to God's knowledge of him or her and, at the same time, conscious of being seen and controlled by Him. Dollimore concludes that God's power in this new dispensation is "intimately conceived:"[50] in William Perkins's words, one is not only "to yield subjection to him," but also "to cleave unto him."[51] In terms of the visual metaphor of Faustus's two viewpoints, corporeal and transcendental, God becomes invisible like an impenetrable mirror that throws only the believer's own image back to him or her as invariably insufficient and empty of individuality: a mere surface appearance. The believer thus loses confidence in his or her own identity and depends for a mere sense of existence on his or her reflected image as if seen from God's point of view, with God's eyes.

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[47] John Calvin, *The Institution of Christian Religion*, trans. Thomas Norton (London: Richarde Harrison, 1562). Book III, Chapter xxi. Fol. 302 (odd page)–Fol. 303 (even page). Images 333 odd page and 334 even page. *Early English Books Online*. 27 Dec. 2013.
[48] Dollimore 114.
[49] Calvin 303 even page.
[50] Dollimore 114.
[51] William Perkins, *An Instruction Touching Religious or Divine Worship. Works.* ed. I. Breward (Abington: Sutton Courtenay Press, 1970) 313. Qtd. in Dollimore 114.

The helpless isolation of the Christian believer in God's sight in Elizabethan orthodoxy is the result of a loss of self and a devaluation of internal, psychic reality. "It is not in our powers to repent when we will," Phillip Stubbes says. "It is the Lord that giveth the gift, when, where, and to whom it pleaseth him."[52] "So if Faustus does not have it, there is nothing he can do," Sinfield concludes (174). Faustus does not accept the arbitrariness of divine grace, and his disappointment is obvious: "*Che sarà sarà*, / What will be, shall be? Divinity, adieu!" (1.1.48f). He attempts to escape the contemporary religious and political consciousness. The "daring provocation offered by Faustus's reasoning" in saying "What doctrine call you this? *Che sarà sarà*, / What will be, shall be? Divinity adieu!" (1.1.48f) "can only be fully understood in terms of the historical situation which Marlowe was expressing," Gatti argues.[53] Marlowe "was writing at the end of a century in which opposing Christian factions had been making ever more drastic use of visions of hell and eternal punishment to ensure the obedience of their adherents" (92). Dollimore remarks that "as embodiment of naked power alone, God could so easily be collapsed into those tyrants who, we are repeatedly told by writers in this period, exploited Him as ideological mystification of their own power."[54]

The mythical hero, in contrast, when he does pass a threshold is scarcely left alone in his trials: "there is a benign power everywhere supporting him in his superhuman passage."[55] Even the Christian Redcrosse Knight is not without a friendly companion when Una escorts him to the "house of Holinesse" and takes him to the "shoolehouse," even though her support is not reciprocated. While Amendment is plucking out his "Inward corruption […] with pincers firie whot," Patience provides him "reliefe" and Una feels "pitty of his paine and anguish sore."[56] A stage in the mythical hero's descent into "his own spiritual labyrinth" is "the 'purification of the self,' when the senses are 'cleansed and humbled,' and the energies and interests 'concentrated upon

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[52] Phillip Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses,* ed. Frederick J. Furnivall (London, 1877–79). Qtd. in Sinfield 174.
[53] Gatti 92.
[54] Dollimore 118f.
[55] Campbell 81.
[56] Spenser I X 18, 25–26, 24, 28.

transcendental things'," Campbell says,[57] quoting Underhill. And even in our dreams, Campbell assures us, "we may see […] the clue to what we must do to be saved" (84–85). Our ancestors, Campbell claims, were able to rely on "symbols and spiritual exercises" when facing mental distress, because their beliefs still represented "the real problems of contemporary life" (86f). Faustus, however, in his quest of a transcendental fulfillment, does not only have to lose his agency, but is bereft of the help of sympathetic fellow travelers.

Even if he submitted to the salvation plan outlined by Paul and John, he would depend on divine mercy as a consequence of the universal inevitability of sin.[58] Faustus is defenseless against the textual determination of what would happen to him as the explorer of a higher, transcendental existence, and he must forgo the hope of making amends for his sins in purgatory.[59] But if he turns to magic, he might fill the void and experience his own existence in interaction with material reality, learn about the virtues of living beings, the influences of celestial bodies on them, and an intricate network of inter-dependence that might give him a dynamic sense of identity. No sooner does he say farewell to divinity than he puts down the Bible and picks up another book, possibly Cornelius Agrippa's *Occult Philosophy or Magic*,[60] in the hope of bringing his mind in harmony with a spirited world: "his dominion that exceeds in this / Stretcheth as far as doth the mind of man!" (1.1.61f). The practice of magic requires a knowledge in natural philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, and theology.[61] Even the Chorus admits Faustus "profits in divinity" (Prologue 15); he has just cast

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[57] Campbell 84.
[58] The fact that Faustus does not pass the "door" to enter Protestant Christianity through the holy Scriptures (according to the doctrine *sola scriptura* attributed to Martin Luther and confirmed in Calvin, Fol. 303, even page) in the first scene postpones his initiation to collapse it with his death in the final scene of the play. This, as I observed above, lends to both events an unrealistic quality.
[59] Stephen Greenblatt claims that the Catholic clergy in England benefited enormously from the willingness of the wealthy to buy ritual services on their behalf to shorten their time of atonement in Purgatory. The anticlerical sentiment arising from this made the doctrine of Purgatory "vulnerable." *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001) 28.
[60] Gatti conjectures that it might be either this or the Picatrix (97). Agrippa's book is likely, she says, since Marlowe chooses the name Cornelius for one of the magicians Faustus calls for as aids and because Faustus dreams about becoming "as cunning as Agrippa was" (1.1.118).
[61] Henry Cornelius Agrippa, *Occult Philosophy or Magic* (Chicago: Hahn & Whitehead, 1898) 38.

Aristotle aside, and Arithmetic, Geometry, and Astronomy were parts of the Quadrivium.[62] In the practice of magic, he might reconcile his desiring self and an external point of view.

4. The Promise of Magic

Although he hopes to unite his desire for immediate experience with a capacity to conscious knowledge and control in magic, Faustus cannot redeem this promise. His perception has been shaped by the nature of signs he intends to use as tools, and these afford him a mere abstraction and a distant view of the world. The subtle play of interdependences in occult philosophy eludes Faustus's eagerness to know, when he plans to use the material world as a repository of resources. As a result, he remains outside the knowable world he intends to grasp.

Instead of an isolation from the natural environment, Agrippa instructs "the studious artisan" (1.1.56) in understanding resemblances that connect "Stones, Metals, Plants and Animals,"[63] the soul (54), and even each of the human senses (54f) to the different elements. Here, God does not appear to be distant, but is in "all things," and "nothing […] is content with the nature of itself." As Faustus anticipated, "the Soul [is] extended into divers things about which it operates," and "man […] extends his intellect unto intelligible things, and his imagination unto imaginable things." Moreover, as Zoroaster and Synesius believed, when the Soul leaves its habitation and permeates another thing, it alters it (69). Agrippa's is a fluid universe of interdependences.

The *Picatrix*, similar to Agrippa's *Occult Philosophy or Magic*, is an extensive treatise on "theurgic Neoplatonism," describing a world with "currents of influence cascad[ing] from the divine unity at its summit" and teaching the magician about the "ways of these currents" and how to tap

[62] E. H. Gombrich, "The Renaissance – Period or Movement?," *Background to the English Renaissance. Introductory Lectures*, eds. A. G. Dickens et al. (London: Gray-Mills, 1974) 9–30. 11.
[63] Agrippa 53.

into them "to perform magical works."[64] Rather than closing himself down, the God of the *Picatrix* wants to be known; in fact, his "greatest gift […] to humanity [is] that they might seek to know and understand."[65] Faustus seems to be animated with the "passion" (26) to acquire such a knowledge. At least, magic seems to have "ravish'd" (1.1.111) him as did previously Aristotle (5f), then medicine, law, and divinity had done.

The experience of a narrow escape from the emptiness and subjection he feared would overpower him in the "hard" (40) tenet of sin and death, however, might make his "*libido sciendi*," the longing for knowledge, tainted with a "*libido dominandi*" a desire to rule.[66] As a consequence, instead of a desire to understand and interact with living and inanimate beings, a sense of possession and a tendency to arbitrary, whimsical, and ruthless exploitation characterize his treatment of them. He acts as if he impersonated the Protestant God whom Walzer characterized as tyrannical.[67] However he purports to ignore the Christian doctrine he refuses to name, Faustus has already internalized the rigor of God who seems to be absent from his creation. Once he aspires to a transcendental agency, Faustus cannot help being energized by the perspective which offers him an operational distance to the world. As soon as he says "adieu" to divinity, he imagines that, empowered by a "metaphysics of magicians," he can fill its place. He replaces Jerome's Bible with "necromantic books" (1.1.49–51) full of "[l]ines, circles, seals, letters and characters" (52) that are just as much removed from the experience of the world they purport to explain as the paradoxical injunction in Paul and John he tried to escape from before. Mere signs do not bring him closer to finding himself, "the studious artisan" (56). The more he expands his view, the more general it appears to be. In his climactic moment of grasping the world in a heroic intellectual effort he identifies it with his own abstract imagination: "his dominion that exceeds in this," that is, in magic,

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[64] John Michael Greer and Christopher Warnock, "Introduction," *The Picatrix*, eds. John Michael and Christopher Warnock (Iowa City: Adocentyn Press, 2010) 11–19. 12.
[65] *The Picatrix* 26.
[66] Gatti 98.
[67] Dollimore 114.

"[s]tretcheth as far as doth the mind of man!" (61f), he exclaims. Ironically, he calls his sources of inspiration "heavenly" (51).

His perception of the world changes once Faustus assumes a standpoint which promises a comprehensive view of the universe and perhaps an understanding of the seeming paradox that its creator offers participation in his divine plan to his most "excellent" creature, "man" (2.3.9), only in exchange for his self-annihilation. Now he tries to vindicate his previous anticipation of a "greater subject" than "to dispute well" (11, 8), of a "profession […] esteem'd" more than one aiming merely at "our bodies' health" (26, 17), and less "servile and illiberal" than parceling out "external trash" (36, 35) among disputants. All these professions engaged Faustus in a give-and-take of offer and acceptance. All of them required him to submit his senses and his action to tedious rules of interaction and the "ravishment" of reading (7–8, 6), to meet the challenge of the "plague" and other "desperate maladies" (21, 22), and to respond to "petty case[s] of paltry legacies" with his knowledge of Justinian (30). Now, in a state of delusion, such restrictions almost entirely evaporate; and the power of mere desire transports "the studious artisan" (56) to "a world of profit and delight, / Of power, of honor, [and] of omnipotence" (54f), where an exchange between parties gives way to the power of a disembodied, all-seeing eye.

5. "Libido Dominandi"

The distance Faustus creates between himself and the world by attempting to appropriate it by means of signs corresponds to the unreality of an all-encompassing and simplifying visual image. Faustus constructs the world anew in his appropriating gaze. The view he creates in his fantasy does not afford him any understanding of processes or the connections and correspondences among objects or phenomena magic seemed to promise.[68] Faustus even seems to have lost the

[68] In his article on "Marlowe and the Fruits of Scholarism," Richard F. Hardin sums up the disappointing lack of insight magic yields to Faustus, saying, "the play supposedly rejects the stale bread of conventional

capacity for empathy to recognize the similarity between his position and that of Mephastophilis with regard to a distant and unapproachable God. While he is not able to reflect on his own perception consciously, Faustus alienates himself from the world he was eager to turn into his own "dominion" (1.1.61).

Seen from Faustus's transcendental vantage point, the world changes its appearance. Its image appears as an even surface with point-like objects at clearly defined locations or moving predictably across it. To make his vision unobstructed, Faustus irons his image of the globe into a flat plane displaying what he desires to see. Even the remotest objects appear with the same sharpness in outline, be they gold in India, pearls at the bottom of the ocean, or "pleasant fruits and princely delicates" in any "corners of the new found world" (1.1.83, 84, 86, 85). At the same time, Faustus perceives these objects as types or categories exhibiting their most characteristic attributes as their hallmarks. Gold is typically in India, pearl is "orient," that is, "lustrous," fruits are "pleasant," and delicacies are "princely" (83, 84, 84n, 86). Disparate targets in the field of his vision have no intrinsic qualities to individuate them; each exemplifies invariably the premium quality of its category.

Previously, Faustus was able to immerse himself in one subject at a time, even though his attention had a limited span. He had to shift his attention and activity constantly from one field to the other: from "Aristotle's works" to Galen, to Justinian, and to what he called Jerome's Vulgate. This way he focused on one subject at a time, and reached a considerable depth of understanding in each, before he moved on to the next. Now he has no difficulty in fixing his gaze on the whole world at once from a distance to encompass its totality. "All things that move between the quiet poles," he asserts, "Shall be at my command" (1.1.58). He stresses his achievement in overcoming the strict boundaries that hitherto separated the fields of which he could engage only in one at a time:

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learning and doctrine for the exhilarating narcotic of occult knowledge, forbidden power. Yet, this reading collapses when we learn, beginning with the pranks on the Pope, the folly of Faustus." *Philological Quarterly* 63 (1984): 387–400. 393.

"Emperors and kings / Are but obey'd in their several provinces," he revels in his new-found freedom, "But his dominion that exceeds in this," that is, "excels" in magic, "Stretcheth as far as doth the mind of man!" (1.1.58f, 61, 61n, 62).

Nonetheless, while he has a vision of the whole knowable world, Faustus lacks an understanding of its processes and of the nature of the connections between its constituent elements. Objects on display in this visible and characteristically *visual* world are not related to each other or connected to a larger whole of which they would form an organic part. They have no history: they are not subject to change, evolution, growth or decay. Gold is pure without needing to be mined or processed from the ore, pearls are ready to be collected, fruits always ripe for the harvest, and "delicates" need only be relished. Resources are in endless supply and ready to serve Faustus's gaze, and he is unaware of the constitutive effect it has on their existence, their arrangement and appearance.

Faustus's relation to his world is, nonetheless, more complicated by his impulse to take possession of it as a conglomerate of diverse objects and opportunities in a single intellectual and creative gesture. Moreover, while his imagination gives rise to an array of potential targets for his desire, his attitude about them betrays a distrust of their reality and an uncertainty of their actual availability for him. At first sight, all items in the inventory seem to be offering themselves like fruits hanging from a tree awaiting Faustus's picking, if he wished to reach out for them. However, Faustus is so overpowered by the effect of this mirage, the "conceit" of what he only refers to with the vague deixis "this" (79), that he is not even sure if he can inhabit this world as if it was his home. He does not even consider what he needs of the infinite resources, for what purpose, or in what order. In addition to being at a remove from his imaginary world, he senses even the spirit that might give rise to this garden, this "fruitful plot" (Prologue 16), as a being separate from himself. He gives life to it in a purely intellectual, masculine kind of procreation when he says, "Here tire, my brains, to [be]get a deity" (1.1.64 and 64n). And then he halts in his gesture of plucking the "apple"

he has conjured, asking, "*Shall* I make spirits fetch me what I please […]?" (80, emphasis added), as if he were wary of treading on the ground of this earthly paradise himself lest it should turn out to be the figment of somebody's imagination—and possibly not even his own. He had rather send those spirits to explore it than do it himself. As he goes along and reveals more of the miracles of this created universe and his own perception of it, he resembles more and more Bottom in the fairy world.[69] However, Faustus's orders are even less direct than those of Bottom, and their conditional character undercuts the effect of his hesitant attempts to ascertain the nature of his world.[70] Continuing from the tentative question quoted above, Faustus wonders if he should ask those spirits to "Resolve me of all ambiguities" (81), as if even his own doubts were an entity separate from himself. His implicit references to his own perception create the impression in the reader or the audience that he hesitates to trespass on alien territory. He is not appropriating this world in his own right, but rather tentatively testing the reality of his own existence in somebody else's image of it.

For the medieval chronicler, the surface appearance of separate entities expresses their characteristic nature. This is not unlike Faustus's identification of gold with its origin in India, pearl by its "lustrous" or "orient" quality, and of "fruits" and "delicates" by their being "pleasant" and "princely" respectively (83f, 86). From his reading of English medieval texts, William J. Brandt concludes that the description of the essence of something by a list of its attributes with no reference to its "relationship to anything else in the universe […] is characteristic of medieval

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[69] "Scratch my head, Peaseblossom. […] Monsieur Cobweb," Bottom says, "kill me a red-hipped humble-bee on the top of a thistle; and, good monsieur, bring me the honeybag." Shakespeare, *A Midsummer night's Dream, The Norton Shakespeare. Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York, London: W W Norton, 1997) 814–861. 4.1.7, 10–12.

[70] T. S. Eliot's Prufrock echoes Faustus's characteristic first person interrogative to express a similarly timid intention to interfere with the outside world, for example in line 122 of "The Love Song," saying, "Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?" In the poem this uncertainty is coupled with the paralyzing effect on Prufrock of being seen, as in "(They will say: 'How his hair is growing thin!')" and in "(They will say: 'But how his arms and legs are thin!')." *Collected Poems 1909–1962* (London: Faber, 1963; New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963) ll. 41, 44.

thought generally."[71] This "approach to the phenomenal world," Brandt makes it clear, "prohibits explanation and, in any modern sense, understanding" (8).

In this respect, too, the new vision Faustus acquires is medieval. It deprives him of an understanding of anything that might lurk beneath the even surface of his mirage, like, for example, the psychological reality of a suffering mind. He can imagine hell only as a location like every other place on earth, and has no concept of an altered state of mind like being "tormented" mentally as a result of "being depriv'd of everlasting bliss" (1.3.79f), as Mephastophilis is trying to explain the consequences of the Fall for him. Faustus calls his own lack of compassion "manly fortitude" (85), while he is, in fact, unable to see the close connection between Mephastophilis's rue over his loss and his own longing to become part of God's eternal bliss in heaven.[72]

Faustus shares with Mephastophilis his obsession with and fear of the Christian God and his inability to resolve the conflict between his desire to experience his nearness and his dread of being annihilated by it. Stephen Greenblatt calls this ambiguous attitude a "subversive identification with the alien."[73] Faustus's constant hesitation issues from a resentment at his own perception that to embrace the scriptural doctrine, to enjoy a position of belonging to God, requires that he dissolves his self in a predetermined mold. He senses a potential companionship with Mephastophilis on the basis of their shared distance from God and their inability to overcome it. Still, this companionship cannot develop into a solidarity or an understanding. Neither Faustus nor Mephastophilis can accept and take ownership of their religious personae.

In his fantasy, Faustus becomes God himself, the magician, who creates spirits to serve him and who holds the entirety of creation in his all-encompassing gaze. He takes up the creator's point

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[71] William J. Brandt, *The Shape of Medieval History: Studies in Modes of Perception* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1966) 8.
[72] Faustus's inability to understand Mephastophilis' sense of loss is all the more striking because, in contrast to the morality tradition, "the more typical qualities of the stage devil" in this play "are thrust into the background, and [Mephastophilis] emerges as a real and suffering individual being" (Cole 240).
[73] Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) 203. Qtd. in Dollimore 118. See also footnote 51 above.

of view to understand his divine plan, but the vision he acquires this way is severely restrictive and disappointingly simplifying. If he is an impersonator, this attire does not become his own.[74] Faustus's science of "[l]ines, circles, seals, letters and characters" enables him to "raise the wind," to "rend the clouds" (1.1.52, 60), and to render the resources of the earth ready at his disposal in his fantasy. He is not in interaction with them anymore because he cannot respond to their needs as beings in their own right. His vision of the world is now alienating compared to his experience of it when he was "still but Faustus, and a man" (1.1.23).

At the moment when he manages to formulate his own attitude to the universe surrounding him most explicitly, Faustus loses it as an object of his genuine, unprepossessed interest. The exclamation that "his dominion that exceeds in this / Stretcheth as far as doth the mind of man" (1.1.61f) signals the summit of Faustus's intellectual achievement and introduces a decline in his ability to take and understand the world that he thus appropriates on its own terms. As a result of the dramatic irony in the way Marlowe represents him, when Faustus names objects that appear to him now in a characteristically medieval, disparate manner and describes ways he could play with them by merely rearranging and redistributing them, he in fact celebrates a way of seeing which envelops him and protects him from being affected by those objects. In this, his view of the world becomes mechanistic and superficial. Instead of understanding it, he holds it at an arm's length, at an operational distance.

In spite of his refusal of the plan of salvation, Faustus is still a captive of the medieval, Augustinian model of the Christian view of subjectivity. Charles Taylor calls this view "the inwardness of radical reflexivity."[75] As St Augustine prescribed it, Faustus rises above his own self in search of a "higher reality" (128). While he makes himself, as a consequence, the "object of [his

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[74] Wearing it, he is "besides his part" like the "unperfect actor on the stage" in Shakespeare's "Sonnet 23," "Whose strength's abundance weakens his own heart." *The Norton Shakespeare*. *Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York, London: W W Norton, 1997) 1930f.
[75] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989) 131.

own] attention" (130), he also puts himself in a position outside the sensual world. Faustus is not merely a decentered subject in Jonathan Dollimore's sense,[76] but he also loses his grasp on the world he desires to inhabit. He becomes a mere spectator of an image he projects onto the screen of his imagination.

6. Referential Semantics

Not only Faustus's perception, but his attitude to signification, too, lags behind the creative use of language in contemporary literary texts where, according to Sir Phillip Sidney, wisdom is "figured forth by the speaking picture of poesy."[77] Although he has exceptional poetic skills, his dependence on the theological frame of reference condemns him to a simplifying literalism. The training he receives from the devils limits Faustus's chances to give meaning to his experience. His attempted escape from a narrow discursive and perceptual framework does not allow him a greater freedom of action.

While the play is meta-theatrical in the sense that it emphasizes the experience of the world as a show, Faustus approaches this series of performances as audience, as impersonator, and as director, in a thoroughly anti-theatrical, and what is more, anti-poetical way. He conceives of the theatrical production of meaning in a predominantly referential manner, in which each word corresponds to one single referent in the outside world. Gatti argues that the strictly allegorical way of signification in "that most dreary of tired spectacles,"[78] for example the procession of the seven deadly sins, reinforces Faustus's belief in a "magic" "connection between words and things."[79] Each character in this show is a tautology in itself to reconfirm the "power of language" in a naïve sense

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[76] Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (1984; Durham: Duke University Press, 2004) 153–181.
[77] Sir Philip Sidney, *The Defense of Poesy*, *Sir Philip Sidney's Defense of Poesy*, ed. Lewis Soens, Regents Critics Ser. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1970) 17.
[78] Gatti 103.
[79] Richard Waswo, *Laguage and meaning in the Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987) 26.

of reference as Richard Waswo defines it: "the immediate, magical control of objects and persons" (25). Belzebub instructs Faustus in the art of taking each character to represent exactly what its name suggests[80] and, conversely, to say its name to invoke it as a notion that that name designates: "Now Faustus, question them of their names and dispositions" (2.3.107), Belzebub says. Faustus's experience in each case that those "dispositions" are identical with their "names" confirms his concept that words and ideas fuse in an ideal and unquestionable unity, and this conviction, in turn, provokes and justifies his response to each appearance.

This kind of training in the simple referential use of words forestalls an understanding of how words signify and how they create meaning and an illusion of reality. In the B-Text, Pride, for example, introduces itself saying, "I am Pride," and once it gives enough evidence of its identity, Faustus remarks, "[t]hou art a proud knave indeed."[81] Envy enters in the same fashion, with the words "I am Envy," and Faustus gives it its cue to exit, exclaiming, "Away, envious rascal!"[82] Gluttony names itself, similarly, as "Gluttony," and Faustus condemns it saying, "Choke thyself, glutton!"[83] Finally, Faustus comments on this exercise in unproblematically identifying name with essence saying, "this feeds my soul."[84]

Waswo contrasts the strict unity of word and its meaning in medieval referential semantics and the Renaissance semantic revolution which recognized the conditional relationship between sign and referent and employed the creative power of the word in poetry. His definition of referential semantics sums up the kind of signification Faustus practices here: "referential semantics," Waswo argues, "does not explain how language means, but either escapes or celebrates its power to do so."[85] The Renaissance, however, was a period with a heightened linguistic and

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[80] As Cole says, "in the raw, vulgar expression of their true natures" (238).
[81] Christopher Marlowe, *The Tragedy of Doctor Faustus* (B-Text, 1616)*, Doctor Faustus*, ed. David Scott Kastan (New York, London: W. W. Norton, 2005) 54–122. 2.3.110, 119.
[82] Marlowe, *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, ed. Michael Keefer. 2.3.129, 135.
[83] Marlowe, *The Tragedy of Doctor Faustus* (B-Text, 1616), ed. David Scott Kastan. 2.3.139, 151.
[84] Marlowe, *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, ed. Michael Keefer. 2.3.161.
[85] Waswo 26.

poetic creativity. In the linguistic consciousness of the period, a shift took place "from referential to relational semantics." The former model takes language "as the clothing or container of thoughts, feelings, objects, and meanings," while the latter regards it "as constituting those thoughts, feelings, objects, and meanings in the very act of articulating them."[86] The exercise in signification Lucifer and Belzebub provide defies Waswo's argument that "a constitutive view of the relation between language and meaning emerged in the Renaissance" (61).

Lucifer and Belzebub's instruction on language use is, further, the opposite of Giordano Bruno's emphasis on experience as the primary guide in a creative, poetic name giving. Gatti sums up Bruno's stance in *De triplici minimo* saying, words "must be the servants of meanings, not meanings the servants of words as the grammarians make them."[87]

Lucifer and Belzebub train Faustus to perceive the world as a collection of separate, "unique," and "self-subsistent"[88] entities, to identify the essence of these with their surface appearance and behavior, and to sum each of them up in a word that automatically invokes it, so as to etch this elementary perception of a fragmented and incoherent world in his mind. This exercise in a stupefying, unimaginative, and unpoetic signification is in harmony with Mephastophilis' attempt to confine Faustus's vision of the universe within the limits of the Ptolemaic world view.[89] "Nowhere does Mephostophilis allow him so much as to crack the compact shell of conventional dogma and explanation," Gatti states (103). To Faustus's enquiry about "the nature of demons and hell," Gatti adds, Mephostophilis "replies with the accepted biblical explanation of the war in heaven and the defeat of the over-proud Lucifer" (103). His position in the hierarchy of being determines what Faustus is allowed to know: "to Faustus's ultimate question about the creator and the creation, he returns a scandalized refusal to offer to man knowledge beyond his station" (103). The

[86] Waswo 60.
[87] Gatti 103.
[88] Brandt 9f.
[89] Gatti 102.

restriction of thinking via emblematic concepts helps Mephastophilis confine Faustus's thinking within the limits of "the traditional dichotomy between good and evil, salvation and sin" (103).

This practice includes a tableau vivant with Faustus at its center to confirm his sense of identity. Mephastophilis "fetch[es]" devils to crown him, dress him in lavish costume, and dance around him. When Faustus looks for a sense behind this "show," Mephastophilis dismisses the question saying that it means "[n]othing" and that its purpose is merely to "let thee see what magic can perform" (2.1.82–85). At the same time, Mephastophilis reassures Faustus that he, too, "may […] raise such spirits when [he] please[s]" and "do greater things than these" (86f). Faustus's perception of self-contained objects is going to be reinforced in acts of language that isolate them from the rest of the world.

7. Conclusion

Faustus endeavors to reach beyond the discursive theological framework because he does not accept an identity in the corporate church. However, this attempt falters in both his language and his perception. As a result, he constructs for himself a simplified, imaginary world that corresponds to a static, literal use of language, which allow him no understanding or meaningful action. The third play I have discussed represents an exception from the others in this dissertation: it does not continue the progress toward an isolation of the two components of identity, self and persona, in separate characters that *The Comedy of Errors* has begun. While Antipholus of Syracuse represents an amorphous sense of desire, his Ephesian counterpart appears as an empty public figure. *Arden of Faversham* and *Othello* will continue this progress of growing division. Nonetheless, Doctor Faustus stands alone in his thwarted attempt to build a discursive persona and use it as a vantage point to manipulate the world as a collection of objects. He cannot make the discourse he joins his own, and his perception of his self becomes as alienating as that of mere objects in his imaginary view.

Chapter 4

From "Circulating Passions" to the Power of Discourse:

The Structure of Identity in Henry VIII and in *Arden of Faversham*

This chapter takes a step deeper into the crisis of identity. While Hodge overcomes his conundrum triumphantly and finds a unity of public persona and inner self in a gesture of tying up his breeches with a leather thong and understanding himself as a marriageable young man, Antipholus of Syracuse's search for a social function ends with the stifling of his unique identity in perpetual namelessness. Arden's insistence on his essential, organic self and his blatant denial of the necessity to build a social figure for himself in Faversham creates a tragic irony: everybody around him perceives him as a representative of the crown. As a result, he cannot escape his fate in a town controlled by forces reactionary to the economic and political consequences of Henry VIII's reformation and even to Edward VI's radical Protestant innovations in worship.

After a survey of how the two main elements, passion and discourse, that influence the perception of identity in the play appear in the criticism, I will rehearse the main points of the theory of identity formation that dominated early modern Christianity, based on the explanation I included in the Introduction. I will use Henry VIII's formidable figure as an example to show how identity formation worked in practice. To uncover the reasons for Arden's failure, I will ask the question if similarities can be detected between the technique Henry used to successfully present himself as a political figure and the way dramatic characters in fictional Faversham struggle for power. An understanding of Arden's tragedy will emerge when we see why he resists following the dominant pattern.

1. Passion versus Discourse in the Criticism

Domestic tragedy emerges as a forerunner of modern tragic drama in Ada Lou Carson and Herbert L. Carson's survey of *Domestic Tragedy in English* insofar as both genres use "common characters," and the tragic outcome in neither of them follows "only from inner weakness" but "can be the result of outer forces."[1] This definition in itself accounts for much of the attention paid to those "outer forces" around "common characters," especially in the case of *Arden of Faversham*—a play with obvious references to real-life people below the line of "the most important of all divisions in early modern society: that between the nobility and gentry on the one hand and the commonality on the other."[2] With respect to modern drama, the authors of the survey characterize those "outer forces" as "not the mysterious forces of fate" but rather a determining frame "created by humans but not necessarily controlled by humans" (1). By this the authors mean "social influences, economic developments, the confluence of national movements," etc., which I would sum up as the unintended consequences of human activity, and which can be observed not only in the background of modern British and American drama but certainly in the drama of Tudor England as well. However, *Arden of Faversham* is special in this respect because the forces that influenced the historic event the play dramatizes, the murder of Thomas Ardern,[3] can be traced back directly to royal policies under Henry VIII and under his son Edward VI. Edward continued his father's primarily "political" and "legislative" reformations and turned them into a more

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[1] Ada Lou Carson and Herbert L. Carson, *Domestic Tragedy in English*, Vol. 1 (Salzburg, Austria: Universität Salzburg, 1982). 1. "In English domestic tragedy are the roots of modern drama" (33), they argue. With Keith Sturgess, the authors suggest even that "the better Elizabethan domestic tragedies anticipate twentieth-century 'kitchen-sink drama'." Keith Sturgess, *Three Elizabethan Domestic Tragedies* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin, 1969) 7, qtd. in Carson and Carson 35.

[2] Michael Neill, *Putting History to the Question: Power, Politics, and Society in English Renaissance Drama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000) 52.

[3] The historic personage the dramatic character Thomas Arden stands for was "known in his own time as Ardern." Lena Cowen Orlin, *Private Matters and Public Culture in Post-reformation England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994) 15.

pronouncedly "Protestant"[4] reformation. The play reflects both the socio-economic and the religious consequences of these policies.

Written accounts tried to obscure and erase references to such connections to the crown beginning with the Harley manuscript Holinshed used for his 1577 edition of the *Chronicles*,[5] the primary source of *Arden of Faversham*. Due to a perceived "impertinence" of the story, in the decades following the publication (1577 and 1587) of Holinshed's *Chronicles*, Richard Helgerson argues, "Arden's murder wholly lost its place in the formal writing of history."[6] In this respect, the story fared no better than "a whole range of […] suspect historical interests […] that were repressed by the post-Holinshed redefinition of history" in the framework of what Helgerson dubs the "humanist enterprise" of Holinshed's "more discriminating Elizabethan and Jacobean successors" (135). As a result of this tendency in "humanist historiography," the murder story has been driven out of the bounds of "serious" (135) writings and survived in marginal genres like *popular history*, the *history of crime*, and *domestic history* which accommodate interests in the play and its real-life background at the expense of defining its subject matter as "vulgar" (136), "disruptive" (137), and "private" (138), respectively.[7]

As Helgerson formulates, in the light of documentary evidence pertaining to Arden's murder "the division of elite from popular, of law-abiding (or law-making) from criminal, of public from private, of men from women, of national from local […] all crumble" (152). In Neill's words, *Arden of Faversham* presents a world of ambitious bourgeoisie, upstart serving-men, and masterless

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[4] Christopher Haigh distinguishes between the two in his *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 187–202.
[5] Martin L. Wine, "Introduction," *The Tragedy of Master Arden of Faversham*, ed. Martin L. Wine. The Revels Plays Ser. (London: Methuen, 1973) xlii. Richard Helgerson sums up the most crucial connections between low and high that are absent from written accounts.
[6] Richard Helgerson, "Murder in Faversham," *The Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain: History, Rhetoric, and Fiction, 1500–1800*, eds. Donald R. Kelley and David Harris Sacks, Woodrow Wilson Center Ser. (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 134.
[7] New historicist studies seem to save the value of stories like that of Arden by presenting them as "particular" and "odd" (Helgerson 144). And this, Helgerson claims, was Holinshed's attitude in telling the story as well.

swaggerers, in which [a] boundary between the gentle and the common appears dangerously porous" (57f). In the country, as in London, belief in the power of textuality fights its battle against menacing, chaotic forces like female sexuality, Catholic idolatry, and pagan mythology[8]—with the latter bundle of forces having slightly more chances of survival in the country, as the play illustrates, than in London, and enjoying there even a short-lived dominance. However, writing and humanist exegesis in the service of the monarchy prevailed in Tudor England, and they drove the story of the struggle out of memory by denying Arden and his demise a place in prestigious writing.

One of the reasons, according to Helgerson, for the exclusion of Arden's case from history, that is, "a new insistence on narrative coherence" (148), is already apparent in the play in two major ways that compete with each other for dominance. On the one hand, the crown attempts to define Arden's persona through the authoritative text of a royal patent; on the other hand, his murderers constantly strive to organize the forces of resistance to Henry's and Edward's revolution in myths of their own creation that would, by the power of their own coherence, incorporate and eventually defeat Arden.

Although the two Carsons' survey does not yet acknowledge the social or historic relevance of *Arden of Faversham*, the connection between Henry VIII's Dissolution and the tensions in the play surrounding Arden, the new owner of the abbey lands in Faversham, is one of cause and effect. As Lena Cohen Orlin formulates, "Thomas Ardern […] played a supporting part in what has been called Cromwell's administrative 'revolution'."[9] The time that had elapsed between the dissolution of the first monasteries under Henry[10] and the events the play represents is merely fourteen years, roughly a third only of the forty years that passed from those events until the first performance of

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[8] "The dissolution of the monasteries, the establishment of a state religion, the growth in royal sovereignty, the networks of national patronage and affiliation, the laws of marriage and divorce – all these are implicated in this local story of adultery and murder" (Helgerson 158).

[9] Orlin 24.

[10] Henry dissolved the first three monasteries (Whalley, Barlings, and Kirkstead) in March 1537. G. W. Bernard, *The King's Reformation: Henry VIII and the Remaking of the English Church* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005) 433. Arden's murder occurred on February 15, 1551. Patricia Hyde, "Arden, Thomas," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 7 Apr. 2014.

the play. Those fourteen years indicate the historic proximity between the Dissolution and, four years after Henry's death, the murder of Thomas Ardern, while the forty years show the lasting interest in the events and in their historic circumstances. According to Orlin, the historic Ardern established himself in Faversham by 1540[11] and acquired town property there in 1545 (31), that is, during Henry's reign. This proves the important connection between Henry's policies and Arden's murder, the subject of the play.

A gradual revelation and close examination in the criticism of the political and economic connections between the court and the social life in Faversham have provided us with a context to understand the treasonous rebellion as a local reaction to the impact of the most important political and economic changes in Tudor England, namely Henry VIII's break with Rome and the dissolution of the monasteries. Although this endeavor has revealed intriguing connections of cause and effect between acts at the court and the murder, it presupposes a one-way relationship top down, and it does not allow for an understanding of possible analogies between how agents on the national and on the local level deal with the same political and economic changes that they participate in and to which they have to adapt. An examination of such analogies might take us beyond the traditional dichotomy of private and public, local or domestic and national, and show that the political, economic, and religious changes in question necessitate the evolution of similar techniques of identity formation both below and above the great divide in early modern society, certainly with vastly different chances of success, as I will try to show.

Furthermore, there is a connection between "the disruption of normal family relationships"[12] as it is apparent in Arden and Alice's marriage and the violence and suffering that

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[11] Orlin 27.
[12] Keith Sturgess, ed. *Three Elizabethan Domestic Tragedies* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin, 1969) 14, 18f, qtd. in Carson and Carson 16.

accompanied the marital career of the English monarch Henry VIII,[13] most notably his marriages to Catherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn, which were entangled with his struggle for dominance over the Church of England[14] and the crucial role of the historic, legal, and religious textual evidence and its tendentious interpretation that helped him succeed. Catherine Belsey makes a direct connection between Thomas Ardern's murder in Faversham in 1551 and a large-scale social tendency she identifies as the crisis of "the institution of marriage" in the period. The crime, she claims, coincided with the beginning of a struggle to eliminate the independence of the private realm of the household in the name of "the public good."[15] The play *Arden of Faversham*, she adds, appeared at a time when the "debate about marriage" (84) became intense. Based on historic evidence she argues that, although the actual number of wives who murdered their husbands did not increase significantly in the sixteenth century,[16] there was a heightened awareness of the presence of mariticide and a fear of its likely occurrence.

In spite of efforts to control marriage and divorce institutionally after Henry's legislative reformation, "the position of marriage remained extremely confused and controversial for the rest of the century," Catherine Belsey claims,[17] with the rigid "Anglican doctrine of the indissolubility of marriage" (96) leaving no escape for desperate spouses other than "whoredoms and adulteries,

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[13] "Alice, if one accepts the arguments of Catherine Belsey, was prompted in her crime by a crisis in the institutional basis of marriage that derived from state action" (Helgerson 133–158. 154). Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (London: Methuen, 1985) 137–144.
[14] In his lecture, Keith Wrightson says, "Henry's interesting marital career was […] part" of the "larger process" of the English reformation he initiated. Keith Wrightson, *Hist 251: Early Modern England: Politics, Religion, and Society under the Tudors and Stuarts. Lecture 8 – Reformation and Division, 1530–1558. Yale Open Courses.* oyc.yale.edu, Fall 2009. 18 April 2014.
[15] Catherine Belsey, "Alice Arden's Crime," *Renaissance Drama* 13 (1982): 83–102. 84. Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (London and New York: Methuen, 1985) 130.
[16] In early modern England, "(and indeed down to the present), men have consistently made up the great majority of those prosecuted for noninfanticidal homicide, and violent offenses generally, and for marital homicide in particular," Martin J. Wiener argues. While men were always the predominant perpetrators of marital homicide, and women the pronounced exception in this role, the attention and treatment each gender received varied greatly over time." Further, Wiener remarks that popular literature in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries significantly overrepresented women among murderers. "Alice Arden to Bill Sikes: Changing Nightmares of Intimate Violence in England, 1558–1869." *The Journal of British Studies* 40.2 (Apr. 2001): 184–212. 186f, 188.
[17] Belsey, "Alice Arden's Crime" 94.

and worse things than these."[18] Alice's crime in its historic reality, Belsey sums up, was evidence of a failed effort on the part of the government to control domestic affairs and instrumentalize the family as "a training ground for the ready acceptance of the power relations established in the social body" (100). However, Belsey does not raise the question whether affairs in the royal family might have contributed to the failure of institutional efforts to stabilize marriage and utilize it in the interest of the state. Henry, the most prominent husband in the nation, divorced and abandoned his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, and Thomas Cromwell abused the charge of infidelity in his case against Anne Boleyn in the service of the state to bring about her judicial murder.

The possible effect of Henry's "domestic" affairs on the status of what we might term private indicates that, besides the social and economic consequences of the Dissolution and the fight over choices in the modes of religious worship during the rest of the Tudor era, the division Henry sowed in the royal household and among his children as successors must have complicated the perception of gender relations and the function and value of the family. Michael Neill emphasizes in the language of the play, a domestic tragedy, the "dramatization of conflicts over rank and status" (52). Henry's reformation came along with events that questioned the independent value of marriage and brutally asserted the primacy of national interest over family relations at the highest level of Tudor society. Belsey's essay places the real-life murder of Arden in a social perspective and acknowledges that the historic figure behind Alice Arden was "caught up in a struggle larger than her chroniclers recognize."[19] The arguments over the meaning of marriage between absolutists and liberals, she says, "cannot be isolated from the political struggles which characterize the century between the Reformation and the Revolution."[20]

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[18] Martin Bucer, "De Regno Christi," transl. John Milton, *Complete Prose Works* by John Milton, ed. Ernest Sirluck, vol. 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959) 447. Qtd. in Belsey, "Alice Arden's Crime" 95, *The Subject of Tragedy* 141.
[19] Belsey, "Alice Arden's Crime" 98, *The Subject of Tragedy* 144.
[20] Belsey, "Alice Arden's Crime" 97, *The Subject of Tragedy* 143.

Theories of a crossing of the boundary between private and public[21] point out but do not quite explain this intricate entanglement of sexuality, marriage, and the family with the larger political and religious changes in the period. Neither Neill nor Belsey, for example, mentions the effect Henry's highly visible figure, towering over his successors and casting his shadow beyond the Tudor era, imprints characters of the play as a model on how to deal with tensions between the two poles of inward passion and social status which affect characters both on the local and the national level, connecting these analogically rather than separating them in terms of hierarchy. Apparently, the historic figure of the "great" king deployed a powerful rhetoric and a vast array of textual evidence in the public arena to overcome his powerful subjects' and the clergy's resistance to his will and that characters in *Arden of Faversham*, similarly, strive to invent more or less coherent narratives, in some cases, like that of Alice, even to rival the authority of an official printed text, to fulfill their desire. This suggests a tension-filled connection between the source of such a will and the medium that allows it to materialize in the public sphere both on the local and the national levels. This is why I suggest in this chapter taking a closer look at the workings of this tension and the way it propels the formation and determines the structure and perception of early modern identity.

Accordingly, Arden's indecision does not merely place him in a precarious position simply between local and national interest, but, more important, between the religiously subversive forces of passion, desire, and illicit worship on the one hand and the discursive practices to which these give rise in social interaction and in the political struggle for dominance. Arden does not take an active part in either of these but succumbs to their combined power as they dominate the local scene in Faversham. The inconsistency Orlin identifies in the play's effort to maintain Arden's tragic

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[21] Mihoko Suzuki, "Gender, Class, and the Social Order in Late Elizabethan Drama," *Theatre Journal* 44.1 (March 1992): 31–45. 38 and passim. See also Frances E. Dolan, "The Subordinate('s) Plot: Petty Treason and the Forms of Domestic Rebellion." *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 43.3 (Autumn 1992): 317–340. Most informative in this respect, however, is Orlin's work on *Private Matters and Public Culture in Post-Reformation England*.

stature when Franklin abandons him "to rash and willful uxoriousness" (72) may give the reader further insight into the actual conflict Arden is struggling with. His sudden change in the perception of his position among the local forces of Faversham and with respect to the court in London highlights the two options he has been trying to keep open up to Scene 13: yielding to the sway of local forces or following the command laid down in the fixed and transparent legal and political discourse of the "letters patents." Local powers are chaotic, with religious, sexual, and magical aspects to it, besides the economic in which Orlin is primarily interested, but the service of the state would allow Arden to appropriate them as resources. What Arden thinks he is is not merely not identical with the role the court assigns to him but also differs widely from how he is perceived in the play's Faversham. I see Arden almost as a morality hero in psychomachia plagued by a pressure to take sides. Orlin correctly states that Ardern had "few possible allies on site" (50), but they are unreliable for Arden in the play not merely for incompatible economic interests but, first of all, because they have their own ways to create meaning, their own interplay of passion and discourse that enthrall him and that he cannot possibly understand, let alone manipulate.

Orlin is aware of the problem of the importance of the context, of the characteristic local ways of exchange, in determining the nature of the meaning they support, and she makes use of a holistic understanding of semiotics in her analysis of Shakespeare's *Othello*. She quotes Clifford Geertz's suggestion in this respect that semiotics should include an approach to signs not only "as means of communication" but also "as modes of thought" for us to be able to "determine the meaning of things for the life that surrounds them."[22] The way Clarke, Michael, Mosby, Black Will, and Alice conceptualize their world, often in nonverbal ways, and translate it into religious, legal, and literary discourse also deserves such a scrutiny. Orlin also points out that Arden seems "indifferent" to the "royal letters patent" (64) that grant him possession of the abbey lands, which

[22] Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1983) 120, qtd. in Orlin 192.

should prompt us to qualify her statement that identifies him as "a king's man in Faversham" (31): he is, I contend, Edward's (and, by extension, Henry's) *unwilling* man at best. In this light, the play itself may do more than serve the aim of "reconfirming […] patriarchal authority" (19). It may present Arden in between two signifying orders, two modes of meaning-making: one pagan, occult, and religiously reactionary, based more on the body, its senses, and its iconic representations than on language; and another which is politically progressive, discursive, and textual. The former is present and it dominates the local, while the absent center of power wields the latter more successfully to represent and convey its message.

Frank Whigham addresses the question of discursive self-assertion in the play, and he is especially concerned with the lack of stability in Arden's standing. Mosby's aspirations compel him to reconceptualize it, Whigham argues, which reveals the constructed, non-essential character of Arden's "honor,"[23] of the "ascriptive entitlement to gentle status" (70) he lays claim to. Whigham is equally sensitive to the mythmaking tendencies in Black Will's fantasy about his own power—a poetry that results from pain and need (98–100). Furthermore, he suggests that Black Will attempts to appropriate a "legalist language" (102) that is not his own. The ruffian's attempt at oral mythmaking exhibits, I think, signs of an emerging heroic narrative, and they rival the power of Arden's verbal fantasies of self-assertion and lay the foundations for Black Will's own entitlement to a semi-legal status to emulate, on his own level, that of his intended victim, Arden. As far as Black Will's poetry is mythical in its aspirations, I am arguing in this chapter, so is Henry VIII's use of texts from "Old Testament kings, Roman emperors and earlier English kings" in the *Collectanea satis copiosa* as "an exercise in propaganda"[24] to support his claim of authority over the English church.

Michael Neill, too, turns his attention to the discourse of power within the play text to point out the "entanglement of sexuality and status […] in the adulterous triangle" of Mosby, Alice, and

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[23] Frank Whigham, *Seizures of the Will in Early Modern English Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 67.
[24] Bernard 49.

Arden[25] and to Alice's deliberate "conflation of honor, wealth, status, power, and sexual attractiveness" (71) in her effort to organize the action of the play. Paradoxically, Neill argues, while Arden's possession of the estate is the basis for his "claim to gentility," it exposes the dependence of this claim on the royal patron who bestows it (58). Similarly, women can have access to power, he says, only through sexuality, but their very act of exercising it erodes the system of relations that gives rise to this power in the first place (71). Notwithstanding the constant danger that women's identities might be reduced to the level of a mere body, Alice in the play makes a considerable effort to give her heathen worship of Love a respectable status when she fantasizes about codifying it in writing, in the emerging medium of the printed book, and binding it to make it look like the *Book of Common Prayer* (8.116–122). While power in itself appears to be illusory indeed, I will try to show that Arden's sense of identity depends exactly on his deliberate avoidance of being defined either by the "letters patents"[26] or by a personal attachment to the place, the land he owns, or its people. He defines himself rather in his own fiction of being a "gentleman of blood" (1.36), which is an essentialist claim not unlike Alice's adherence to the power of sexuality as a positive fact in her worship of "Love" as a "god" (1.101). The fundamental difference between the two, however, appears in the way they utilize their respective assets, the confessed core of their selves, in their struggle for dominance: for Arden, being a "gentleman" is an escape from the persona of landed gentry everybody in Faversham identifies him with. Alice, however, actively builds and maintains a persona for herself of powerful discourse to establish and protect her pagan worship and her love for Mosby; by wielding words as her weapon she ultimately defeats Arden and attempts to dominate even Mosby in the quarrel scene, Scene 8. Arden, in his simplicity, cannot keep up with her strategic employment of the structural superiority of her identity: she blinds Arden with her

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[25] Neill 68.

[26] Anonymous, *Arden of Faversham*, *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, eds. David Bevington et al. (New York and London: W W Norton, 2002) 427–80. All references are to this edition unless otherwise noted.

powerful discourse to hide her real intentions—a powerful front that makes Arden suspicious but leaves him defenseless.

While Whigham elaborates on Black Will's use of discourse in his effort to build his public persona, Mary Floyd-Wilson gives a thorough analysis of the local forces that the royal grant of the abbey lands to Arden stirs up in the Faversham of the play and that it provokes to engulf and annihilate him. The common denominator of the phenomena she discusses is that they are not textual, not even verbal, their signification is ambiguous, and their effect is difficult to control or direct. The interaction among entities and living beings in this realm is often mutual and circular. The powers Floyd-Wilson sums up in what she calls "horizontal theories of causation"[27] are uncontrollable in themselves and cannot be easily translated into verbal or written discourse. What Orlin calls the scapegoating of the historic Alyce,[28] her brutal reduction to a sexualized body and her burning as a witch (81f), especially if we relate it to Henry's charge of witchcraft against Anne and her subsequent indictment, arrest, and execution for alleged adultery, exemplify the danger that the female body could easily be contaminated by occult influences and identified as the source of chaotic passion. Arden, for example, perceives Alice in similar terms. He is characteristically unsure of how to judge the force that drives her. Once he thinks "she is rooted in her wickedness, / Perverse and stubborn, not to be reclaimed" (4.9f); another time he believes she "seeks by fair means to redeem old faults" (13.64).

The kind of secrets Clarke taps into is similarly ambiguous, and its workings are, in addition, circular. He knows how to make and use poisons and, "to an equal degree, remedies" (Floyd-Wilson 193). Self-poisoning through "beams" that emit from the eye and release harmful particles from an object "complements the naturalistic explanations of cruentation," since both are examples of the

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[27] Mary Floyd-Wilson, "*Arden of Faversham*: Tragic Action at a Distance," *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Tragedy*, eds. Emma Smith and Garrett A. Sullivan Jr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) 190.
[28] Orlin 82.

concept of "action-at-a-distance." Furthermore, self-poisoning works on the same principle as do "the neo-platonic theory of love" and the practice of the "evil eye" (193). Floyd-Wilson sums up the "mysterious events" in the Faversham of the play as "a horizontal circulation of eye-beams, spirits and passions" (194). She interprets this circularity as an instantiation of the self-perpetuating "spectatorial" (194) exchange within the theater but, although she mentions "anti-theatrical anxieties" (197) which characterized Puritan thinking, she does not connect the potential danger perceived in figural representation to the most important ideological question at the time of the events the play represents, namely the Protestant fear of the effects of visual symbols in worship, which became prominent during the reign of Henry VIII's son, the boy king Edward VI.

This might help us understand the pressure that shapes Alice's identity. The historic Alyce Ardern, née Mirfyn,[29] functioned as Ardern's link to the source of wealth, her stepfather, who served from 1539 as "treasurer of the court of augmentations, handling the substantial revenue accruing to the crown from the dissolution of the monasteries."[30] According to Whigham, the play depicts Alice in a similar light as a "sexual linkage"[31] between Arden and the court. We might assume that Alice, as a result of these circumstances, defines her own identity in defiance of her assigned role as a mediator of material wealth and power from one man to another:[32] she professes adherence to an unnamed pagan god of Love, a positive value in contrast to the relative one of power with which Neill associates her (71). This suggests a gender difference between Alice, who represents a positive, inherent value in the play and Arden, to whom the royal grant assigns a relational position as landowner and representative, a placeholder for, and watchful eye of, the government.

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[29] Wine xxxvi.
[30] P. R. N. Carter, "North, Edward, first Baron North," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 20 Apr. 2014.
[31] Whigham 73.
[32] This takes place in a process Orlin describes as "the redistribution of national wealth through the transfer of properties from the church to the crown and from the crown to members of the aristocracy and gentry" (17).

Orlin and Helgerson characterize the historic Thomas Ardern as "a king's man in Faversham"[33] and "a servant of the crown,"[34] respectively, but the analysis of the character's perception of his own identity in the play will show that, as I indicated above, he is an unwilling one at that. This already foretells that a rivalry between the power of the textual definition of who Arden is and what I called above the force of passion, in the foreground of what Helgerson terms a "nationally determined partisan and sectarian conflict" (153), will be a central question in this chapter. This rivalry, I argue, had its origin in Henry VIII, who, in contrast to Arden the fictional character, successfully combined the two forces in shaping his identity: he used and bent the power of the written word of chronicles, of legal texts, and of the Scripture to build his persona and to bring fulfillment to the passion of his self.

Following Orlin's and Helgerson's efforts to uncover connections between public and private, between events at the court and in the country, in this chapter I am going to examine the nature of the relationship between those "ordinary people" in the play and "the moral and social problems of the common world" in contemporary England. We have already established that the anxiety and unrest that a social and economic landslide created in the "common world" of *Arden of Faversham* are not limited to its parochial, private, and criminal milieu but appear in the town of the play as ripple effects of anxieties and unrests higher up on the social scale in the England of Henry VIII and Edward VI. The remaining question to answer is if only the effect of political, economic, and religious changes in the period travel down from the national level to the local and the domestic, which the play focuses on, or there is a larger correspondence between underlying assumptions, fears, desires, and means to cope with them "down there" in *Arden*'s Faversham and "up there" at the court.

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[33] Orlin 31.
[34] Helgerson 153, 158.

Although there was even some personal continuity between the Dissolution and the reign of Elizabeth,[35] I would like to emphasize only two crucial aspects of Henry's legacy that continued to determine conditions for later generations in England even beyond the Tudor era. The first is obvious from the main theme of the play: the far-reaching economic and social consequences of the sudden release and commodification of land, which, in the eyes of local landowners and tenants, undermine the essentialism in Arden's own perception of his identity. For them, it descends on him from above in the royal patent. Edward Seymour, the Duke of Somerset, in this position during the reign of Edward VI officially until October 13, 1549,[36] permitted "extensive appropriations of episcopal lands" and the "transfer of crown wealth to private hands" (Beer). In this way, Somerset continued the "plundering and subsequent liquidation of the accumulated wealth of the church" which Henry VIII began and practiced throughout his reign to build up "the number of important landowners who were sworn to his service."[37] This establishes Arden's public persona in an official written document in contradiction to his own sense of identity as a hereditary nobleman, and this remains a contradiction he cannot resolve.

Although his essentialism would relate Arden logically through his possession of the land to the local, organic world of natural causations, the local community ultimately rejects him as an intruder. Doing so, the local forces do not restore their own attachment and natural right to the land either, but rather further precipitate its commodification which Henry began. Franklin's decision to

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[35] Besides the fact that all of Henry's Tudor successors were his children, there is a curious thread that strengthens our sense that we are dealing here with a continuity in administration. Edward North, stepfather to the historic Alyce Ardern, from 1539 "treasurer of the court of augmentations, handling the substantial revenue accruing to the crown from the dissolution of the monasteries," Carter explains, prospered as an administrator and landowner under four different regimes and through radical political and religious changes in England during the first half of the sixteenth century. He managed to maintain his important position at court, in different functions, from the reign of Henry VIII, through the regency under Edward VI, Mary's Catholic restoration, and into the early years of Elizabeth I.

[36] Barrett L. Beer, "Seymour, Edward," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 28 March 2014. Since Arden was murdered on February 15, 1551, the fictional time of the play has to span at least one year and four months.

[37] E. W. Ives, "Henry VIII (1491–1547), king of England and Ireland," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 19 Apr. 2014.

desert Arden when he yields himself up to the local forces, and his, Franklin's role in the investigation and the narrativization of the events, do not merely precipitate the denouement—and this is the second and more important aspect of Henry's legacy that concerns us here—, but they further a shift from a magical way of meaning-making which gives primacy to forces inherent in objects and substances to a belief in the power of the word and opens up the field for a competition among narratives vying for dominance. The way Henry shaped and perceived his identity served, and still serves us, as a model in this process, and the main characters' struggle with identity-formation becomes more apparent if we measure it against his formidable example. Henry did not entirely abandon the Catholic belief in visual, kinesthetic, and tactile representations; but he rather retained their magic as an inalienable component of his self and used its energy to fuel his belief in the power of his verbal and written rhetoric.

2. *Arden* in the Reformation

An understanding of the conflict in *Arden of Faversham* in the foreground of a larger change from the direct access to meaning in objects, substances, and living beings toward manipulating them through language will explain the inevitable development in the formation of identity Henry championed and characters in the play seem to try to imitate. Charles Taylor sums up this break in Christianity away from magic as "a revolution which produced the modern idea of the psyche" and which had to "undermine and replace a deeply rooted popular way of understanding human life and its place in nature, that which underlay and made possible a serious belief in magic."[38] Taylor further elaborates on the character of this change saying that

> it was not just a matter of magic fading away before science. The new disengagement was carried by profound changes in spiritual outlook. One of the most powerful forces working against magic, and for the disenchanted

[38] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989) 191.

> view of the world, was the Protestant Reformation, which was profoundly suspicious of such meddling with occult forces. Magical practices couldn't be allowed as a proper use of divine power, because that would be to assume human control over this, which was against the very principle of the Reformation. Indeed, the Catholic sacraments were often assimilated to magic practices by Reformers and condemned in similar terms. The power must be diabolic, if it existed at all; Protestants accentuated the traditional Christian suspicion of magic. (191)

I am arguing in this chapter that Henry accomplished a similar shift from a belief in natural causations to a Protestant emphasis on the power of the word in creating a layered identity: in his self, he preserved a belief, intact, in the former and tapped into its energies when interpreting texts. This will enable us to see characters of *Arden of Faversham* in their attempts to form their identity in contrast to Henry's monumentally successful technique.

In the "Conclusion" to his extensive study on Henry's reformation, G. W. Bernard states that "the commons were" "deeply mistrustful […] of Henry's policies and [were] attached to their parish churches, religious processions and local monasteries."[39] Neither could the "projected Edwardian Reformation […] expect enthusiastic support from the majority of lay people in positions of power, gentry and nobility," as we learn from Diarmaid MacCulloch.[40] However, in venting their anger on Arden, who outwardly benefits from Henry's policies but inwardly distances himself from them, the commons in the play ignore Arden as their possible ally in essentialism and treat him, like what Orlin calls him, "a king's man in Faversham,"[41] a "servant of the crown."[42] While they sacrifice Arden in the name of the locally circulating, immanent forces of nature, they move beyond their own

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[39] Bernard 601.
[40] Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Boy King: Edward VI and the Protestant Reformation* (New York, NY: Palgrave, 2001) 59.
[41] Orlin 31.
[42] Helgerson 133–58. 153, 158.

reliance on such forces and engage in oral mythmaking and the linear production of narratives to represent themselves as victorious over Arden, their perceived enemy. This technique of tapping into primordial, immanent forces and deploying them in verbal meaning-making to rise above them imitates the way Henry VIII shaped his own identity.

Orlin argues in her "formidably learned"[43] study of the play that "early modern ideas of order were constructed hierarchically, but they were conveyed analogically."[44] While she uses this axiom as a starting point for her survey of "domestic ideas and ideals" across genres and fields of interest in Early modern English studies, I think the combination of the ideas of *hierarchy* and *analogy* might also support, and to an extent structure, my inquiry into the possible resemblances between the way Henry developed his complex sense of identity and the attempts of dramatic characters like Alice, Mosby, and Black Will to move away from their direct experience to reach fulfilment in a narrative. How do characters perceive their identity in the context of this putative similarity of tensions "up" and "down"? To what extent do they emulate in their identity formation a pattern that Henry created in his struggle for fulfilment in power?

As I will try to show in this chapter, the Henrician technique of identity formation that characters unknowingly imitate in the play follows the pattern of the Protestant replacement of images and of the consciousness of a bodily presence in worship and interaction by the power of the word in myth, in narrative, and in scriptural exegesis. Alice refuses Mosby's suggestion to kill Arden by her own poisoned "counterfeit" (1.234) for, although its effect would originate from her likeness, being impossible to control, it might as well kill her. Consequently, Mosby commissions Clarke to manufacture a "crucifix impoisonèd" (1.612). This would not merely free Alice to an uncontrolled pleasure in love in spite of the "oath" she swore to her husband (1.434f)[45] but also, via

[43] Neill 50.
[44] Orlin 10.
[45] The *Book of Common Prayer* codified the oath in "The Forme of Solemnization of Matrimonie" in 1549, still in Thomas Ardern's lifetime. After Mary banned it, Elizabeth restored the book as the basis of worship in

"action-at-a-distance," insult the state that her husband is supposed to represent in Faversham by the perceived idolatry of the representation.[46]

3. Arden's Perception of his Identity

The theory of this circularity in causation among objects and bodies, whether dead or alive, helps us explain also how it eventually can draw Arden into its network after so many frustrated attempts to kill him.[47] *The Book of Secrets* (from 1550), Floyd-Wilson reports, sets out on a study of mysterious connections "by establishing that all things possess a particular disposition" as, for example, "'boldness is in a harlot'."[48] Throughout the play we observe Arden struggling with what appears to him not as a structural complexity in Alice's identity (words of affection for him screening sexual desire for another man) but rather as a genuine ambiguity (does she love me?). Therefore, the resolution of his doubt has to be equally simplistic: she is either benevolent or harmful to Arden. Mosby's disposition appears to be similarly doubtful to him until after the moment he and Alice appear to Arden "marching arm in arm" (12.67) in a tauntingly ambiguous performance intended to "boldly beard and brave him to his teeth" (69) but also explicable as coming "lovingly to meet thee on the way" (91), as Alice says, "but merrily to try thy patience" (95) with "thoughts […] free from harm" (93). Arden, not being an initiate to the network of mutual causations but depending on Alice's and his own verbal efforts to disambiguate Mosby's and Alice's

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1559, long before the play was written. Haigh 168, 241. Church of England, *The Booke of the Common Praier and Administracion of the Sacramentes* (London: 1549) *Early English Books Online* 20 Apr. 2014.

[46] In 1547, three and a half years before the murder of the historic Ardern (February 15, 1551), the Edwardian government launched a campaign of "royal visitation of the Church," similar to the one in Henry's reign in 1538. In the course of the invasion, the rood, "one of the most spectacular pieces of furniture in any traditional church, as it reared above the chancel screen, dominating the laity's view as they looked towards the altar or pulpit," was treated "like any other church image," and it was considered an object likely to be "abused for devotion." As a result, hardly any of them were spared in London, not even the one in "the conservative stronghold of St Paul's Cathedral." Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Boy King: Edward VI and the Protestant Reformation* (New York, NY: Palgrave, 2001) 69, 71.

[47] Dolan (332) counts eight, but he includes in his list contemplated attempts as well like the one with a poisoned counterfeit and the plan to stab him in the fair.

[48] Floyd-Wilson 194.

disposition, can no longer tolerate "being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts," which would be required to maintain what John Keats terms Negative Capability, and gives in to his own urge to reach "after fact and reason."[49] Thus, he offers himself up trustingly to powers he has been trying to sort out in vain. Alice's question, "Hast thou not lately found me overkind?" (13.101), echoes Arden's expectation earlier in the scene that Alice might meet him on his way home, since he, as he explained to Franklin, had perceived Alice lately having "changèd from the old humor / Of her wonted frowardness, / And seek[ing] by fair means to redeem old faults" (13.62–64). So far, Arden has been trying to ignore the contradiction between her words and her murderous intention and to eliminate the ambiguity in his perception of her. Now, he succumbs to a possible explanation that vindicates his belief in his position as a respectable gentleman, head of the household, and, at the same time, an Ovidian lover of the "dark Night" (1.62).[50]

Not having a powerful shield of discourse at his disposal, nor being able to identify with his assigned role as the representative of the distant court[51] to protect his self, Arden hopes to find safety in being accepted in the local community, in fact in his own house, where Mosby is a constant

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[49] John Keats, *The Complete Poetical Works and Letters of John Keats*, The Cambridge Edition of the Poets Ser. (Boston; New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1899) 277.

[50] Arden outdoes Alice in poetic fantasy and ambiguity. While Alice forces one literal meaning on her gesture of embracing Arden while calling on Mosby at night, Arden's words seem to have the power to lengthen the night for more embrace: "Sweet love, thou know'st that we two, Ovid-like, / Have often chid the morning when it gan to peep, / And often wished that dark Night's purblind steeds / Would pull her by the purple mantle back / And cast her in the ocean to her love" (1.60-64). These words cannot be easily traced back to one specific passage in Ovid, but rather to two. Martin L. Wine presents Warnke and Proescholdt's reference to one candidate in "Ovid's thirteenth *Elegy* from the first book of the *Amores*" about Aurora mounting her "hateful carriage" and putting an end to night, the time of love: "Whither runs thou, that men, and women loue not ? / Hold in thy rosy horses that they moue not…" Anonymous, *The Tragedy of Master Arden of Faversham*, ed. Martin L. Wine. The Revels Plays Ser. (London: Methuen, 1973) 1.60–64n.

As opposed to this image of dawn, Ruth Harwood Cline, in discussing Ovidian influence on Chrétien de Troyes's *Lancelot or the Knight of the Cart* calls attention to a description of dusk in book 15 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* which, with the "figure of night defeating day at twilight and throwing her dark cape over the world." Chrétien de Troyes, *Lancelot or the Knight of the Cart*, trans. Ruth Harwood Cline (Athens; London: The University of Georgia Press, 1990) ll. 4544–4545n, p. 222. This resembles "the purple mantle" in Arden even more closely than the *Elegy* does from *Amores*. At the same time, the passage in *Metamorphoses* substitutes evening for morning, which further enhances the ambiguity in Arden's allusion in contrast to Alice's insistence on the literal meaning of her bodily presence.

[51] The historic Ardern's "powerful patrons were," Orlin remarks, "geographically removed" (50) the same way.

presence. This is how the play changes the reason for Arden's dependence on Mosby as it appears in the chronicles so as to represent Arden's unstable position in the context of his wife's aggressively advancing discurse. Holinshed explained Ardern's tolerance of Mosbie's lingering presence in his house exclusively by Ardern's dependence on his wife's relatives,[52] whom the earlier Harley manuscript still identified as one person, namely Alice's stepfather, Edward North (149). The play, on the other hand, presents Arden's acceptance of Mosby as part of his submission to the power in his wife's discourse over his identity. Arden, a "gentleman"[53] floating in a world where the ownership of commodified land is no longer proof of such a standing and where "issues of rank are negotiated" in "a ferocious competition for status,"[54] does not understand the desire for self-assertion behind that discourse. Thus, the play presents not one point of reference above him hierarchically but two poles between which Arden hovers: the court that appears in a mere document for Arden but which, paradoxically, binds him to a land with its people who create their own myths out of hunger and desire. Arden loses his safe distance to the local world of horizontal causations, which suck him up in the "deep play"[55] of Faversham where sexual and murderous desire, the worship of fertility, the direct dependence on the yield of the land, and the uncontrollable power of images unite chaotically.

From the above, it is apparent that Arden does not have the means to assert himself, probably because the essentialism and simplicity with which he attempts to define his identity are, both in the historic context and in the context of the play, inadequate. Arden does not only try to ignore the persona that has been imposed on him by royal patent, but he insists that his identity is not a layered construct but consists in an essence that he carries in the tissue of his body when he

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[52] Raphael Holinshed, from *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (from the second edition, 1587, vol. 2, pp. 1062–6), *The Tragedy of Master Arden of Faversham*, ed. M. L. Wine 148f.
[53] Neill calls attention to Franklin's ironic address to Arden as a "gentle gentleman" at 4.43 (56).
[54] Neill 56.
[55] The words are from Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," *Daedalus* 101.1 (Winter 1972) 1–37. *JSTOR*, 28 Feb. 2014. The "disquietfulness" of the fight issues, he argues, from its three attributes: "its immediate dramatic shape; its metaphoric content; and its social context" (24).

says, "I am by birth a gentleman of blood" (1.36). His declaration as part of the exposition is the inverse of the way Iago positions himself; more precisely, Iago repudiates what Arden asserts. "For when my outward action doth demonstrate / The native act and figure of my heart / In compliment extern," he begins his run-up to the famous paradoxical definition of his identity, "'tis not long after / But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve / For daws to peck at."[56] And this is exactly what Arden does: in his words and action he consistently impersonates and exhibits his nobility, especially in being unavailable for a negotiation of the way land is distributed among men living in the community. Even his descent to the level of Mosby, whom he called a "botcher" (1.25) earlier and whose rise as a social climber he dreads,[57] he disguises, somewhat contrary to his purported essentialism, as Mosby's gracious cooption to gentle status. Before the "botcher" stabs him, Arden calls him "good Master Mosby" and tells Alice to "bid him welcome" saying that "he and I are friends" (14.179f). His claim to authenticity deprives Arden of the means other characters use to assert themselves in what Neill calls a "ferocious jostling for status" in the wake of the "break-up and redistribution of monastic estates" which "accelerated the general commodification of land and rendered disturbingly conspicuous the social mobility attendant upon it" (52). The means other characters utilize in the struggle is mythmaking in discourse.

To build a flexible attitude to his own persona, Arden would need an authority above him he could accept as authentic and that would legitimize, in his eyes, the persona it confers on him. Since this is not the case, he in a self-delusion believes he can sever his ties to the crown; and he perceives himself as an unstructured entity of an independent and inherent essence. His relationship to both Franklin and Alice appears to him to work in terms of an on-or-off binary. He takes Franklin's friendship and support as a temporary basis from which he can reach Alice's love and reestablish their lost intimacy. The ideal of fulfillment for him is an escape from the sight of "foul objects that

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[56] William Shakespeare. *Othello*, ed. Kim F. Hall (Boston, New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007) 1.1.63–67.
[57] Whigham explains Arden's "fury at Mosby" by referring to the sources which show that Arden has risen to status the way he claims Mosby did (69).

offend mine eyes" (1.12), that is, the evidence of Alice's refusal of him, in a perfect sensual union of "we two" who, like one person, prolong their embrace during the night which the power of the Ovidian image extends at 1.60–64. The condition for Arden's wished-for union with Alice is a self-imposed blindness.

Arden would fain turn a blind eye to any nonessential use of signs and tokens. He describes his desired distance from the world around him in self-conscious terms of perception. The exchange of "Love letters," the arrangement of "privy meetings" between his wife and Mosby, and Mosby's flaunting of outward signs and symbolic objects to advertise his possession of Alice and of a social status higher than the one he was born into he calls "foul objects that offend mine eyes" (1.15–18, 12). When Mosby wears the ring that, as Arden says, "the priest put on" (1.18) Alice's finger to mark her as his, Arden takes it as the abuse of a token. When Mosby, a "botcher," that is, tailor "at the first" (25), now "bravely jets it in his silken gown" (30), Arden thinks Mosby disguises himself as somebody other and more important than he actually is. In fact, however, Mosby does more than violate sumptuary laws or steal a ring. He has actually acquired "some small stock" and "become the steward" (26, 29) of a nobleman, as Arden admits, and he has indeed won Alice's affections. It seems, then, that Arden finds it "monstrous" and "intolerable" (23) that Alice would "dote on such a one" (22) who climbs the social ladder and transforms his appearance in the process because this might reflect on essences and expose them as unstable.

The reality of Mosby and Alice affects Arden directly: not as objects he might handle and control, but as an immediate threat to his identity. Their actions determine his self-esteem and even his reputation among the nobility. He is defenseless against the shame he feels Mosby is bringing on him, and he cannot grasp what power enables Mosby to do that: "were he by the Lord Protector backed," Arden contends, "He should not make me to be pointed at" (34f). He even bewails that the Lord Clifford "loves not me" (32) and favors Mosby instead. Since all these circumstances touch him

with a force of immediacy, Arden escapes into a state of denial: he refuses to register them as real and attempts to dismiss them as nonessential.

Consequently, he cannot tolerate hints at inauthenticity in his own actions either. According to the sources, "Mosby precedes Arden" (Whigham 72) in his attachment to Alice. She has been forced into a marriage against her desire, which has reduced her to a mere impersonal link in the chain of the smooth "transfer of properties from the church to the crown and from the crown to members of the aristocracy and gentry" (Orlin 17). As a result, she desperately tries to reassert her own power as a woman in her own right over Mosby. To love Arden would mean for her to embrace her function in an exchange of relative values and her appropriation as similar to them. "The play-Arden," Whigham argues, "is now detached, as a landowner, from the great household that rewarded and elevated Mosby and himself alike" in Holinshed and in Stow. Arden "is rewritten as (almost) honorably resenting the entanglements of sexual, social, and economic mobility." He enacts his "subtracted resemblance [to Mosby] by a pattern of *conspicuous denial*" (71 emphasis in original).

Arden, who, as we have seen, has good reason to consider himself a gentleman by birth, cannot possibly become the loyal representative and local executive of the court any more than Hamlet, who argues that he has "that within which passeth show,"[58] can become king of Denmark. Arden, like Hamlet, is a tragic hero who identifies himself with what he conceives as the invisible core of his personality, his *self*. He refuses to admit he has to assume a persona and play a role in social situations. Since he insists on his innocence, he cannot impersonate his assigned function in a social order that he rejects for its mendacity,[59] and so he resists an attempt on the part of the

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[58] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet, The Norton Shakespeare. Based on the Oxford Edition*, eds. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York, London: W W Norton, 1997) 1668–1756. 1.2.85.

[59] Thomas More is a historical figure with a similarly tragic inhibition. When he was "asked to swear to the Act of Succession on 12 April 1534," Seymour Baker House explains, "he refused to do [so] because of the oath's preamble [which] reject[ed] papal jurisdiction." "He pointedly refused to attend [Anne's] coronation, and to the bishops who urged his attendance he related a parable whose application he summed up for them:

Edwardian government to define his identity by royal patent. As a consequence, for the state he becomes, if not an enemy, still potentially subversive and, at least, useless. This is why Franklin, the single loyal representative of the interest of state in the play, as Orlin formulates, "abandons Arden to rash and willful uxoriousness and goes some way toward making his murder aesthetically palatable—if still not ethically justifiable" (72).

Arden's "I am by birth a gentleman of blood" (1.36) also indicates his fear that her adultery with Mosby might undermine Alice's respect for the hereditary essentialism Arden purports to represent. As a result of her betrayal, he might lose the security his privileged position among other noblemen has granted him. This suggests that Arden is, already at the beginning of the action, aware that the nearness of Mosby, who has redefined his persona by means of insincere "flattery," "fawning" (28), and outward signs, is capable of destabilizing his organic identity. The possibility "torments" Arden's soul, because, to be able to defend his rights actively against Mosby, he would have to acknowledge that his "birth," even together with the "letters patents" that he never mentions explicitly, does not give him that protection automatically. As Whigham formulates, the

> readiness with which Arden is repeatedly dissuaded from the act, as opposed to the posture, of vengeance perhaps suggests the posture's *assumed* character, a would-be aristocratic mantle of the *nemo me impune lacessit* stance ("no man harms me with impunity") that reaffirms by negation Arden's actual similarity to the mobile Mosby (69).

'Your lordshippes have in the matter of the matrimony hitherto kepte your selves pure virgines, yeat take good head, my lordes, that you keepe your virginity still. For some there be that by procuringe your lordshippes first at the coronacion to be present, and next to preach for the setting forth of it, and finally to write bookes to all the world in defens thereof, are desirous to deffloure you; and when they have defloured you, then will they not faile soone after to devoure you. Nowe my lordes … it lieth not in my power but that they may devoure me; but god being my good lord, I will provide that they shall never deffloure me' ([Roper] 59)." Seymour Baker House, "Sir Thomas More." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 22 Feb. 2014. House quotes William Roper, *The lyfe of Sir Thomas Moore, knighte*, ed. Elsie Vaughan Hitchcock, Early English Text Society Ser. 197 (London: Oxford University Press, 1935) 59.

This reading of his perception of his own identity suggests that Arden's cautious distancing of himself from the disingenuous political and economic practices, the "fruits" (Whigham 63) of which he never explicitly refuses but, nevertheless, cannot relish, defines his position in the drama as awkward.

4. The Formation of the Early Modern Identity

Examined in the foreground of the dominant early modern ideal of identity formation, Arden's attitude about who he is is anomalous. The period seems to be an important stage in the process of the *maturation* of the western Christian subject. The subjection to authority as prescribed in Protestantism shapes the adherent's sense of identity as a representative of that authority. Jonathan Dollimore explains the mechanism at work here:

> although God is remote and inscrutable he is also intimately conceived: "The principal worship of God hath two parts. One is to yield subjection to him, the other to draw near to him and to cleave unto him" (Perkins, *An Instruction Touching Religious or Divine Worship*, p. 313). Such perhaps are the conditions for masochistic transgression: intimacy becomes the means of a defiance of power, the new-found importance of the subject the impetus of that defiance, the abjectness of the subject its self-sacrificial nature.[60]

Once the subject has gone through a similar experience of helpless subjection and "intimate" identification with the source of power, it will become aware of itself in a radical separation from it. The identification first endows it with a new sense of its own "importance" which, in turn, will enable it to represent that power independently in the world. Since Arden is not able to represent

[60] Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*. *Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004). 114.

the absent crown in Faversham effectively, we must suspect that his sense of identity has not been shaped by the experience of a subjection to its authority in the first place, as Perkins prescribes it.

The subjection William Perkins elaborates on and demands has two main aspects: *conformity* and *separation*. On the one hand, the Christian believer has to strive to achieve a maximum of spirituality, similar to that of God. He or she has to let go of visible and tangible aids and to give up "outward & bodily rites and actions"[61] in the practice of his or her worship. Only in overcoming the physical aspect of our selves can we do justice to God "in spirit and trueth" (203), he says. To secure this sincerity, in Saint Paul's words a "*faith unfeigned*," we have to worship God not only in the heart but also in "the spirituall renewed motions thereof." Our trust in and reliance on God's "Mercie" as "the maine and principall" form of worship serves the believer's *conformity* with God "in holinesse and goodnesse […] whereby his image is renewed or restored in vs" (202). On the other hand, our "sacrifice" of ourselves to God as an "accessary or lesse-principal" form of worship secures a sense of *separation* from his power in abject devotion.

Parallel to the Protestant ideal of identity formation through proper worship, Franklin's offer of the written document of the royal patent in the first lines of the play works emblematically as an invitation to Arden to *identify* with the remote state and to represent its interest *independently* in Faversham. At the same time, this offer entails a request to turn away from the local, the figural and tangible, and to "Read" the written "deeds" instead (1.6, 8). In the context of post-Reformation, Edwardian England, with the church firmly incorporated in the state in the Act of Supremacy, Franklin's words and gesture appear as a secular, profaned, and politicized version of the injunction "tolle lege"[62] which St Augustine described he had heard and followed. Arden,

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[61] William Perkins, *A Warning against the Idolatrie of the Last Times. And an Instruction Touching Religious, or Diuine Worship* (Cambridge: Iohn Legat, 1601) 203. *Early English Books Online*. 14 March 2014.
[62] "Take it, read it!" Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Vernon J. Bourke, The Fathers of the Church Ser. 21 (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1953) 224.

however, refuses to read; instead, he continues to attend to "those foul objects that," he says, "offend mine eyes" (1.12).

The early modern evolution of individualism is inseparable from the emergence and the "glorification of the individual household" (Orlin 2). Lena Cowen Orlin, the reader will recall, conceptualizes "early modern ideas of order" in terms of a dichotomy similar to Perkins's *conformity* and *separation*: they were, she writes, "constructed hierarchically, but they were conveyed analogically" (10). The patriarchal family resembled in structure the realm, but it was subject to a function of support: "every man's house could be […] a little world sufficient unto itself" with its "individual privacy" (2), but the "state designated the individual household […] as the primary unit of social control" (3). We observe here, too, the *conformity* that governed the analogy between "domestic philosophy" and "political ideology" (11f) and the *separation* when "the domestic began to be […] viewed as a mere service philosophy […] of a larger order" (12). Ownership of property resulting from the Dissolution, Orlin claims, precipitated the development of a sense of "individual identity" together with a manifest subjection to the government that allowed the ensuing "merchant economy" to thrive (2).

William Perkins's principles of "Diuine Worship" originated in St Augustine's doctrine which, in turn, built on the Platonic distinction between body and soul. Charles Taylor identifies the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries as the period of "an immense flowering of Augustinian spirituality across all confessional differences," and he adds that it did not only help shape the Enlightenment but still powerfully influences our perception of identity today.[63] According to Augustine, and herein he contrasts with Plato, we have to direct our gaze inward first to find, understand, and follow the ultimate reality below the surface of our bodily existence (129). This act Taylor calls "the inwardness of radical reflexivity" and argues that Augustine introduced it into Western thought (131). Modern subjectivism, he says, is founded on this recognition of the

[63] Taylor 141.

superiority of reason to sense as the truth within, which is, at the same time, "common to all" (132f). This is how "the way within leads above," to the truth which is "*not* in me" but above me, "'in' God" (135).

The demand for a personal subjection to the good as the way to moral improvement comes to the fore, Taylor claims, in the early modern period (137). But how is this subjection enforced? The will has to be freed from its inborn adherence to the senses, which we all inherited with the original sin. In Augustine, the "weakness of the will—'*akrasia*'—" is "the central crisis of moral experience."[64] How do we heal the "perversity" (138) in our own will that makes it adhere to the senses? The reflexivity of the self is evil when it is "enclosed on itself." Healing, however, "comes when it is broken open" and it acknowledges that it depends on God. Taylor's statement that "the very essence of Christian piety is to sense this dependence of my inmost being on God" (139) reminds us of the notion of *conformity*, the first criterion which we distilled from Perkins's treatise on proper worship, and now it is easy to make a connection from here to the indispensable function of divine grace in achieving this conformity as the only means of salvation in Protestant theologians like John Calvin. As a result of grace, the individual is put in contact with "a perfection which is," nevertheless, "beyond us," which is "not our own product," as Augustine says (140), and not in our control, as Calvin forcefully argues. Here is the origin of the other important principle we saw was guiding Perkins, namely, *separation*. The awareness of a being "in myself […] more perfect than I" inevitably gives rise to a sense of a lack, an insufficiency, an acknowledgement that it is "beyond my powers to have produced it myself" (141).

The image of breaking open the "evil" self like a nut to heal it is in itself a contradiction, and it provides us with a model, a justification for the use of the energies originating in such reflexive

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[64] …as it is, we remember, central to the second book, on "Temperaunce," of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, first published in 1590, around which time (1588–92) *Arden of Faversham* was written according to David Bevington et al. "Introduction to *Arden of Faversham*," *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, eds. David Bevington et al. (New York and London: W W Norton, 2002) 421–26. 421. It was first performed in 1591 and printed in 1592 (Helgerson 136).

selves that appear to be "enclosed" in themselves, subject to their senses, and, therefore, evil, as resources in the formation of mythical, narrative, and textual personas in the process of assuming an independent will. The metaphor of healing by cracking open in the evolution of early modern identity also explains why members of the Faversham subculture shape their personas in narratives emerging out of the circulating, chaotic energies available to them locally. Franklin ultimately subsumes these independent growths under his singularly authoritative master narrative that retrospectively seems to have framed them all. Consequently, Franklin, rather than Arden as Orlin and Helgerson claim, is the actual "king's man in Faversham,"[65] the true "servant of the crown."[66]

5. The Most Prominent Self in the Period

What experiences shaped Henry VIII's sense of identity which imprinted itself on the Tudor age, and how did that sense influence the identities characters assume in *Arden of Faversham*? How do they try to *conform* to Henry's example *analogically*, and to what extent are they aware of the injunction of *separation* and of subjection in a *hierarchical* relationship to it? I answer that Henry presented an unsurpassable example of the power of individualism, which he derived from the fullness of a well-developed dichotomy in his sense of identity: the tension between a strong self, rooted in the sensuality of his bodily existence, his desire, and his belief in the power of nonverbal, figural symbols in worship on the one hand, and a strategically calculated effective discourse with reliance on authoritative texts to bring those powers to fruition in politics. He identified with a chivalric ideal as a child and, as an adult, used historic, legal, and religious discourse successfully to impose his role as a mythical hero on his nation. He knew no separation from his ego-ideal, but conformed with it unhesitatingly. On their own levels, characters like Mosby, Alice, and Black Will

[65] Orlin 31.
[66] Helgerson 158.

exhibit a similar striving for totality: they weave the desire of their selves into more or less elaborate narratives to reach fulfillment. They, too, forget how to separate themselves from the idea of perfection which lies, in Perkins's Christian piety, strictly beyond the self.

Franklin's identity, however, seems to have been shaped ideally in the political variety of the Perkinsean mold: he does not embody his own power but represents and conveys that of the distant crown, while he stands above the material reality of the subjects below him. He disappears at the end of Scene 13, giving Arden over to his fate and his wife, its "instrument" (13.154), thus preserving himself "vnspotted of the world" (Perkins 203). In contrast to Arden, he has no conflict with the viewpoint of the authority above him, and he has no desire for a fulfilment on his own that would compromise his detachment from the local world of Faversham. He appears as sheer, sterile persona with no core of a self within it. Thus, opposite to that of the local forces, Franklin represents the other of the two poles Arden is caught in between.

To illustrate the way Henry submerged in sensual experience and drew on it to rise above the senses and to hold them in control by the power of reason in a way similar to the Augustinian inwardness of reflexivity, I would like to offer the event of his initiation to knighthood. The experience of the three-and-a-half-year-old boy and later its memory represented for Henry VIII, David Starkey argues, an opportunity to live "the fantasy for real"[67] and, I would add, it was filled with sensory stimuli that do not originate in language. The ceremony Henry went through involved ritual gestures and visual and tactile symbols[68] of the kind that were still in practice in churches at that time (in 1494) but became anathema for believers during his son Edward's reign when the events *Arden of Faversham* represents took place. Henry's experience was an immersion into the

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[67] David Starkey, *Henry VIII: Mind of a Tyrant. Episode 1: Prince (1485–1509).* Channel 4, April 6, 2009. OVGuide.com. June 8, 2013. 21 Feb 2014.

[68] The structure of the ceremony followed the trajectory of initiation rituals with humbling and the infliction of some pain on the body followed by relief. The series of events started after sunset with a ceremonial bath and admonition, and it continued into the night with a moderate mortification of the flesh and the imposition of humble submission. This took place in the evening of October 30, 1494. In the early morning, Henry was elevated into the ranks of knighthood. Robert Hutchinson, *Young Henry: The Rise to Power of Henry VIII* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2011) 21.

world of the senses, and in one important respect at least it was strikingly similar to the mode of signification Mary Floyd-Wilson dubs "horizontal circulation:" it consisted more in physical action and perception than it was textual or verbal, and, as a result, its meaning was ambiguous and subject to discursive interpretation. The repetition of the gestures in the "deep play" of an old ritual,[69] might have represented in Henry's memory later a moment of unmediated presence, similar to the Augustinian look inward, but not yet up. This also shaped his religious belief: as MacCulloch emphasizes, Henry insisted forcefully "on the corporal presence of Christ" in the eucharist.[70]

The experience at this stage was not yet affected by Perkins's later condemnation of "outward & bodily rites and actions" which, as he thought, had "no power to sanctifie" (203). In one word, the initiation was an event in the pre-Reformation way of meaning-making in an old tradition. Henry's "bath" might have become memorable to him in its pictures and sounds, in sensations on the tongue, on the skin, and even in internal bodily organs.[71] The process of going through "a second and higher baptism into the sacred role of a knight," David Starkey says, "would change [Henry's] life."[72] Robert Hutchinson points out that, many years later, the adult king Henry "amended the herald's report of the ceremony, inserting," for example, "a phrase demonstrating" that, as a child, he was holding in his hand a golden rod during the initiation (24). Henry must have

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[69] Anstis in his *Observations Introductory to an Historical Essay upon the Knighthood of the Bath* "traced 'the Antiquity of Knighthood of the Bath,' in a wide sense of the concept, to the 'old *Franks*' and the Saxons, who introduced it to England, but admitted that it was 'of no greater Antiquity, in this Kingdom, than from' Henry IV's reign." Antti Matikkala, *The Orders of Knighthood and the Formation of the British Honours System: 1660–1760* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Boydell Press, 2008), 92. John Anstis, *Observations Introductory to an Historical Essay, upon the Knighthood of the Bath* (London: printed for James Woodman, 1725).

[70] MacCulloch 67.

[71] The *Historical Account of the Honourable Order of the Bath* interprets the tangible symbols of the ceremony: "The *new clean Bed* into which he is put after Bathing is said to denote the perfect *Serenity of Mind*, which is to be the final reward of a Series of virtuous Actions" (28f). "The *White Belt* represents the *inviolable Chastity* he is obliged to observe, in Opposition to *impure Love*; which is the rather to be expected from him, as he is himself now become an *avow'd Protector* of *Female Virtue*. […] The *Sword* is a Symbol of declaring *open Defiance* to the *Devil*, and his Resolution to defend the Cause of the *Poor*, against the *Rich*, and of the *Weak* against the *Strong*" (29). *An Historical Account of the Honourable Order of the Bath*, *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. Gale Cengage Learning 2008. 26 Feb 2014.

[72] *Henry VIII: Mind of a Tyrant. Episode 1: Prince*.

thought it was an important detail to emphasize retrospectively; he turned his memory of himself touching an object, a meaningful symbol, into an image and documented it himself, writing the words between the lines of the herald that he carried "his verge [rod] of gold in his hand" (24).[73] The rod represented the power he attained when he became king[74]—a power that rose even above the church and subdued it. Hutchinson thinks this shows his "delight in gaudy pageantry and lavish ceremonial" (24). Starkey, however, sees more in this: for him, it "proves that the ceremony made an unforgettable impression on the little boy" and that "all his life Henry would think of himself, however badly he actually behaved, as a chivalrous knight."[75]

The fact that Henry found it necessary to put the detail with the "rod" in words which he inserted in the court document might seem paradoxical at first. However, it exemplifies the idea of transition from tangible, visible symbols to writing and reading, which is at the heart both of the humanist enterprise and of the protestant Reformation. Haigh sums up the importance of textuality and discourse in the reformation claiming that "Protestantism was the religion of the Word printed as well as preached."[76] Henry had his dream in the sensual order of signification and made it work through exegesis, in the order of the textual. In his early education, he made a connection between martial exercises and serious study. In the education of royal sons in the period, Carolly Erickson

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[73] Two years before the appearance of Hutchinson's book, David Starkey claimed to have made this discovery himself with Andrea Clarke in the original copy of the report held in the British Library. *Henry VIII: Mind of a Tyrant. Episode 1: Prince*.

[74] Cola di Rienzo's seven-months "rule" in the Rome of 1347 offers a curious antecedent to Henry's reformation in European history. Cola, Walter Ullmann says, "proclaimed the restoration of secular Rome, […] the 'demundanization' of the Church and its confinement to exclusively supranatural issues." The bath Cola took "in the tub allegedly used by Constantine," Ullmann asserts, had a highly symbolic importance as a "rebirth" Cola himself termed the "*lavacrum militare* or the 'bath of military glory'." Since he became a tribune, which was the title of a military commander in ancient Rome, he called himself *Miles Nicolaus* (Knight Nicholas). He "appeared in scarlet, girded with a sword and wearing the golden spurs of the equestrian commander." In his manifestos, he promised "to reform, renew, renovate the world by applying the ancient purely human, secular principles of Rome." *Medieval Foundations of Renaissance Humanism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977) 137–39.

[75] *Henry VIII: Mind of a Tyrant. Episode 1: Prince*. In amending the text, Henry turned a non-discursive childhood experience retrospectively into a promise that later came true: when he took the "bath," he "was not expected to succeed to the throne;" instead, his elder brother, Arthur, "Prince of Wales was being trained for the kingship." D. M. Loades, *Henry VIII, King of England, 1491–1547* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Amberley, 2011) 42.

[76] Haigh 193.

writes, chivalry "was taken as seriously as the classics, and Henry's young head was filled with tales of knightly valor, of 'virtue and honor,' and of the prowess of his medieval ancestors."[77] Characters in *Arden of Faversham* like Mosby, Alice, and Black Will also attempt to make use of texts and narratives to fulfill their desires of dominance.

6. Building the Textual Armor, the Persona, for the Self

When Henry read William Tyndale's *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, besides the attractive notion of the absolute obedience of the subject to the monarch, he might also have found his belief in the prophetic force of sacred rituals corroborated in it.[78] Tyndale treated sacraments as holy signs that represented "allwaye some promise of God."[79] He discussed the importance of baptism, one of what he believed to be the only two true sacraments right after his section on the other one, the Eucharist. The "plunging in to the water," he argued,

> signifieth that we dye and are buryed with Christ as cōcerninge the olde lyfe of synne which is Adam. And the pulling out agayne signifieth that we rise agayne with chaste in a new lyfe full of the holy goost which shall reach vs and gyde vs ād worke the will of God in vs as thou seist Roma. vj. (xc).

With his reference to St Paul's Epistle to the Romans, Tyndale here places baptism in the context of the salvation plan the fulfilment of which the "washinge" prefigures and promises. In Tyndale's own translation the passage reads,

> Remember ye not / that all we whiche are baptysed in the name of Jesu Christ are baptysed to dye with hym. We are buried with him by baptyme /

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[77] Carolly Erickson, *Great Harry* (New York: Summit Books, 1980) 28f.
[78] Henry read the book upon receiving it from Anne Boleyn. Upon doing so, he famously declared, "This is a book for me and all kings to read!" Alison Weir, *Henry VIII: The King and his Court* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2008) 297.
[79] William Tyndale, *The Obediēce of a Christian Man* (1528) lxxxix. *Early English Books Online*. 20 March 2014.

> for to dye / that lyke wyse as Christ was raysed vp from deeth by the glory of the father / euen so we also shulde walke in a newe lyfe.[80]

Besides the discursive explication of the meaning of a ritual, Henry must have understood Tyndale's prophetic attitude to interpretation. Sacraments as signs for Tyndale are transparent. They point to a promise, and he emphasizes again and again the importance of believing in that promise: "the work of the sacramente saveth not / but the faith in the promise which the sacramente signyfieth iustifieth vs only" (clx). This interpretation presupposes a hypothesis that the believer can determine the meaning of the ritual through a faith that does not necessarily originate in it.

Along with the notion of the arbitrary explication of symbolic acts, Tyndale teaches the attentive reader how to grasp the essence of written discourse by working through figures of speech and reducing them to the function of mere glue or solvent for the truth: "allegoryes […] are nothinge but ensamples borrowed of the scripture to expresse a texte or an open conclusion of the scripture as it were to paynte it before thyne eyes / that thou maist seale the meaning and the power of the scripture in thine herte" (cli). Meaning, accordingly, does not reside or originate in the text and the "conclusion" is "open" to an immediate, intuitive understanding, almost independently of the actual words. In his exegesis, Henry did not start from the text itself but from his passion which urged him to select passages that supported his case and to manipulate them to do so.

Henry commissioned scholars to prove by documentary evidence that his kingdom was not subject to the authority of the pope. This committee assembled in 1530 a "compendium" called the *Collectanea satis copiosa*,[81] "loosely translated as the collection that says it all," based on "English history, Anglo-Saxon law, and the Old Testament."[82] After studying it attentively, Starkey says, Henry "convinced himself that the pope in Rome had no legitimate authority in England. From this,

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[80] William Tyndale, *The New Testament of our Sauior Jesus Christ* (1536) Romans 6:3f. *Early English Books Online*. 14 March 2014.
[81] *The Sufficiently Abundant Collections*.
[82] David Starkey, *Henry VIII: Mind of a Tyrant. Episode 3: Lover.* Channel 4, April 20, 2009. OVGuide.com. June 8, 2013. 21 Feb 2014.

the king apparently concluded that instead, as Starkey adds, it was he, "Henry as king who was rightful head of the English church." The technique of using legal, textual support for the persona of the secular ruler as a front against papal authority was not Henry's original invention. Public law, Walter Ullmann argues, was the "instrument" in the hands of late Roman emperors "to harness the ecclesiastical organism to their governmental designs."[83] Public law gave the secular ruler "a profiled countenance with clean-cut features" which helped him prevent "intervention by the papacy on juristic grounds" (43). The distinction between, and the successful combination of, self and persona we observe in Henry can also be summed up in the terms of "*individua substantia*" and "*persona mundialis*" Otto Freising used in his historical writings (67).

The attempt in Mosby, Alice, and Black Will in *Arden of Faversham* to emulate the dominant way of identity-formation and -perception by developing a tension between passion and discourse, self and persona, is finally punished as treasonous. Besides sexual and murderous desire, subversive passion in these characters includes religious belief and practices that were illicit in Edwardian England.

7. Textual Persona and Passionate Self in *Arden*

In elevating himself above his church in political terms and terms of possession, Henry fulfilled *conformity* with the divine order, the first principle that underlay Perkins's teaching on worship and Augustine's theory of the formation of identity, but he clearly ignored and flouted the second, a humble *separation* of himself from divine power and an acknowledgement of his insufficiency. One of Henry's most lasting historic achievements is that he replaced the church with the state as the ultimate judge over individual conscience. From now on, rightful action was whatever served the mythical state (impersonated by the king) as the worldly manifestation of

[83] Walter Ullmann, *Medieval Foundations* 43.

God's will, and the written law of the state (also dictated by the king) gave structure to that will. Henry managed to institute this in the framework of "national sovereignty"[84] as the outward appearance of a mythical chivalric impulse and desire.

Arden of Faversham testifies to the effort in the characters of Alice, Mosby, and Black Will to emulate this eagerness to stake out new territories for individual action and to free themselves from the control of conscience by formulating alternative mythical and poetic narratives and impersonating them similar to the way Henry did. Compliance with these evolving narratives, these characters believe, would confer legislative power on them as their authors and, as it seemed to happen to Henry, would exculpate them from moral blame. As I will try to show, the two modes of meaning-making are also components of a structured identity. I would sum them up, somewhat simplistically and phenomenologically, based on how they appear, in the words *passion* and *discourse* respectively. The former gives the stuff, I propound, of the invisible self while the latter is the fabric of the public persona.

7.1. Alice

Henry built his persona up consciously as a shield of textual references to protect his self, his heart's desire, his sexuality, and used the written word as his weapon to fight off obstacles in his way. Alice Arden shows a similar twofold structure in her identity: she is driven by a powerful sexual desire,[85] and she throws a barrage of words on her husband to create a screen of seemingly literal assertions. She is an expert in wielding language to build her persona and in making Arden believe that it is identical with her true self. Nonetheless, in a short soliloquy she reveals the discrepancy in terms of true inward feeling and public discourse:

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[84] Starkey, *Henry VIII: Mind of a Tyrant. Episode 3: Lover*.

[85] Leanore Lieblein calls the intensified passion in Alice, compared to its source in Holinshed, one of the "most interesting changes" in the play. "The Context of Murder in English Domestic Plays, 1590–1610," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 23.2 (Spring 1983): 181–196. 183.

> Sweet Mosby is the man that hath my heart,
> And he [Arden] usurps it, having naught but this:
> That I am tied to him by marriage.
> Love is a god, and marriage is but words,
> And therefore Mosby's title is the best. (1.98–102)

This clearly indicates the primacy of emotions over the words that constitute marriage which Alice considers a mere formality. In her attitude, love is bound up with the idea of the fertility of her body. Accordingly, she blames Arden for thrusting "his sickle in our corn" (10.86) and thus interrupting an ongoing natural cycle similar to that in agricultural production. She equates "life" with "love" (91) suggesting that by thwarting their love, Arden is in the way of life. Consequently, he, the representative of the Protestant government, "must leave to live, that we may love" (90). Therefore, when Black Will pulls Arden down from his "stool" (14.120) with a towel, Alice stabs him "for hind'ring Mosby's love and mine" (239).

In contrast to her marriage, where Arden depends on her words, in her communication with Mosby Alice depends on Mosby's bodily gestures as acknowledgment of her emotions. She sends a "pair of silver dice" (123) to remotivate the allegedly "wondrous sad" (115) Mosby and to remind him of their play for "kisses" where "winning" and "losing" (126) alike resulted in an exchange of bodily signs of mutual affection. The sight of Mosby and his gesture in "salut[ing]" (129) her, even from afar, would be more meaningful for her than Arden's recitation of a passage from Ovid's *Amores*, to which she fails to respond. Alice's strategy is to engage Arden's attention with the power of her words and to endear herself to Mosby with bodily gestures.

As far as it involves human sacrifice[86] to a personified instinct, Alice's pagan worship of love as "a god" (1.101) goes even beyond Catholic practices. Moreover, she turns her protest against the

[86] Helgerson remarks that "a Faversham agronomist assured me that Alice was a witch and that Arden was murdered in a ritual sacrifice" (141).

imprisonment of her love in marriage into a demonstration of the body in the strict Edwardian regime that organized rallies to uproot visible symbols and the practice of elaborate bodily gestures in worship. MacDonald P. Jackson connects the notions of adultery and of religious impropriety, arguing that "Alice's sacrilege defines her moral world."[87] In her interaction with Arden and Mosby, Alice does not merely defy the modesty associated with chastity, but she brings back "the drama, movement and visual impact" that "Somerset and his colleagues" removed from "the Church's traditional liturgy" and "which gave it much of its power."[88] Consequently, while Alice has good reason to keep her "religion" and the plan of the ritual murder of her husband as a form of worship secret from Arden, in demonstrating her presence in spectacular bodily gestures she makes an unmistakable statement that puzzles Arden by its crass opposition to her words. While in bed with her husband, she enacts a gesture of love for the absent Mosby and explains it to Arden next day saying, "Why, who was there but you? / And where but one is, how can I mistake?" (1.71f). She poisons Arden's broth and refuses his suggestion that it is "not wholesome" saying, "You were best to say I would have poisoned you!" (1.367, 370). In Alice's usage, words indeed "become weapons."[89]

At the same time, the shame in being seen and the lingering power of the words she herself has uttered are a source of hesitation in Alice. She threatens Mosby with renouncing their shared belief in the power of love and fertility, with returning to Arden, and restoring the truthfulness of her marriage vow. Her reason to do so would be that, instead of protecting her from the literal power of the written word, her escape to "Mosby's love" and her surrender to blind pleasure "without control" (1.275) rather expose her to the censure of the watchful world. Like her husband, she feels she carries Mosby's "lowborn name" in her "forehead […] engraven" (8.77, 76). She tells

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[87] MacDonald P. Jackson, "Shakespeare and the Quarrel Scene in *Arden of Faversham*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 57.3 (Fall 2006): 249–293. 252.
[88] MacCulloch 81.
[89] Jackson 252.

Mosby that she regrets having let her "words be carried with the wind / And published in the world, to both our shames" (8.64f). After her attempt to renounce Mosby and return to her role as "honest Arden's wife—not," she points out, "Arden's honest wife" (8.73) in the quarrel scene, she urges Mosby to "let us in to shun suspicion" (8.165). While previously she was eager to publicize her love and murderous desire "without control" (1.275), now it seems she cannot escape from being seen and being heard.

Moreover, Alice fears that her unruly desire would produce monstrous results: "I pray thee, Mosby," she entreats her adulterous lover, "let our springtime wither! / Our harvest else will yield but loathsome[90] weeds" (8.66f). However, when Mosby skillfully asserts his own dignity and threatens Alice with reducing her to the image of an "unhallowed" witch (8.93f) and a "foul" "counterfeit" (102, 101) who overpowered him temporarily with her "spells and exorcisms" (95), Alice gives in and admits that Mosby's "stormy look" (113) has more power over her than that of the world. As a proof of her submission, she now promises to "burn this prayer book where I here use / The holy word that had converted me." While she is aware of the risk of degradation and shame involved in her pagan worship of fertility and contemplates returning to chastity in marriage, she finally chooses to destroy the words of prayer printed on paper in a spectacularly defiant act of sacrilege.[91] "See, Mosby," she urges,

> I will tear away the leaves,
> And all the leaves, and in this golden cover
> Shall thy sweet phrases and thy letters dwell;

[90] The belief that "a deformed child was evidence of misconduct" surfaced in the later rumors that the foetus of Anne's miscarried third pregnancy in 1563 was ill-shapen (Loades 263f).

[91] David Cressy approaches instances of book burning in Tudor and Stuart England as examples of "symbolic action," "part of the public performance of power as well as a means of policing discourse" (361). "They demonstrate," he argues, "that English political culture from the Reformation to the Revolution experienced a long and continuing nervousness about texts" (360). Being a symbolic gesture, its effect on the participants and the spectators was difficult to control, and it was subject to discursive clarification. Therefore, "subjects and citizens could subvert the proceedings to impose meanings and interpretations of their own" (361). The first books to be burned in England were Lutheran prints during the reign of Henry VIII. "Book Burning in Tudor and Stuart England," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 36.2 (2005): 359–374. *JSTOR*. 3 Apr. 2014.

> And thereon will I chiefly meditate,
>
> And hold no other sect but such devotion. (8.116–122)

She destroys the printed word only to overwrite it, like a palimpsest, in words of her own faith. Her hesitation indicates that passionate love and the cult of fertility are in opposition to the printed word of governmentally sanctioned worship. However, Alice's wish to have Mosby's "letters dwell" in the same "golden cover" and to "meditate" on them suggests that even her adamant belief in the pagan "god" of "Love" (1.101) and her worship of Mosby, the self-transforming idol of fertility, needs a codified form, a printed text, to compete with the official, state-sanctioned form of reverence.

After successfully employing a screen of discourse throughout the action to hide her desire and to reach fulfillment, in the short period in Scene 14 leading up to the sacrifice of Arden's blood to her longing, Alice is still in control of the deliberate ambiguity of her figures of speech and confidently directs one meaning to Arden and another to Mosby, who overhears the conversation. However, once Arden's blood is spent, her elaborate discursive persona collapses, and she falls back on an inherent kind of signification. Her feelings overwhelm her body and invade her words. Alice admits in embarrassment that she does not blush at Arden's death (14.260). When she realizes the blood stains will not disappear from the floor, she confesses to Mosby that "My husband's death torments me at the heart" (14.270). Her words indicate that Alice now is a captive of Arden's perceived presence, the effect of which is not anymore in her power to control. The experience of the ritual murder has enveloped her, and now she cannot extricate herself from it. She has turned into a sign with its meaning inherent in her body, in her face, similar to the floor of her house that now has absorbed the blood. It is as if visual symbolism with its intrinsic meaning had overpowered Alice, who has so far wielded it and governed its interpretive mechanism discursively to manipulate Mosby and Arden.

As a result of her falling back on the intrinsic meaning of feelings and gestures, Alice's playacting, in front of the guests, intended to portray the wife anxious about her husband's absence assumes, ironically, a genuine tone. She asks Greene and then Franklin to confirm that they saw Arden recently alive (14.279, 282); and when Mosby offers a toast to her "husband," Alice cries out in anguish, "My husband?," and adds that her "husband's being forth torments my mind" (300f, 304). Here she is having fought for more than a year (if we take her to represent the historic Alice) for her freedom, and now she realizes she cannot make the exchange. She feels Arden's presence more powerfully than when he was alive. Although she tells Mosby to replace him in his "seat" (14.288), when he leaves with Franklin and Greene, she realizes that, even if he came back to her, he could not substitute for him or dispel the "fear" (326). Her real feelings break through the thin layer of pretense uncontrollably, and her acting connects and confounds meanings rather than sorting them out, as it did before she committed the act. When she tells Franklin to "seek" Arden "forth" and to "tell him what a fear he hath put me in" (311, 313), we have no doubt that, confounded though she is, her emotions are real and unrestrainable.

Alice's concern for the power of fertility at the core of her rebellion leads us naturally to summarize the importance of this notion in the play. Alice herself sets the subplot in motion when she recruits candidates to kill her husband by offering Susan, her waiting-maid, Mosby's sister, as a prize to two men at the same time: Michael (1.148) and Clarke (287). In accordance with this, the energy for murder, as a precondition for the renewal of productive energies, is frequently expected in the play to issue from love and sexual desire. As Julie R. Schutzman sums up the connection, "murder takes on much more than the significance of revenge; […] it becomes synonymous with the fulfillment of desire."[92] For example, by helping the assassins devise how they may "conclude" Arden's death, Shakebag suggests, Michael will "purchase Mosby for thy friend / And by his

[92] Julie R. Schutzman, "Alice Arden's Freedom and the Suspended Moment of Arden of Faversham," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 36.2 (Spring 1996): 289–314. 291.

friendship gain his sister's love" (3.168f). Michael declares his desire for Susan and his hope to marry her as his motive for agreeing to Arden's murder (18.23–25).

The expectations to overcome Arden's lingering presence as a perceived obstacle in the way to Susan and Michael's betrothal fills the supper scene with the importance of the climax. For Arden, however, this is the celebration of his reconciliation with Mosby, who is actually his wife's lover. Arden himself invites Franklin, Mosby, the goldsmith, and the host of the local inn "With diverse of his neighbors and his friends" (14.39) to witness the event. Alice orders a cook (46) and arranges Michael and Susan's engagement for the same night (44). To make the absurdity in the conflation of three divergent meanings (ritual sacrifice, betrothal, and reconciliation) manageable, Alice has to make sure the guests Arden has invited will be locked out while he is being murdered in the house (168f). Alice's investment in primordial forces has attracted and brought together a chaotic circulation of contradictory energies in Arden's house this evening. Unaware of their fatal uncontrollability, the hesitant Arden will fall victim to them, while Franklin, the true representative of the Protestant government, stays away from the pull of their tide.

7.2. Idolatry versus Textuality

The rivalry Alice foments between Michael and Clarke for Susan's hand in marriage offers an example of the strife of the explicit power of the written text against the more inherent meaning of visual images. At first, Mosby favors Clarke (1.262) and poisoning as the means of murder (280), but he drops the idea later with Alice, and Clarke disappears from the action altogether. As a result, not only the act of murder becomes a more dramatic event and a communal one at that, but the effect of visual symbolism also loses the competition against the power of the written word: Michael, who woos Susan in letters, defeats the painter Clarke's efforts to attract her with pictures. The play puts subversive forces to two different uses: it explicates them and destroys their agents. On the one hand, Franklin, the impassive representative of the government, constructs the

narrative of indictment based on visual and tangible evidence in the denouement, and, on the other, the murderers, who deploy more or less coherent mythical accounts to rival the written law and authoritative religious texts for the dominance of the local scene and to help their passion to victory, are severely punished. In this light, Michael's defeat of the painter suggests that Catholic visual representations, too, are doomed as subversive together with the occult powers of nature and sexuality.

While Mosby moves from playing with idolatry to textuality, the rivals for his sister, Susan's hand represent the two ways of meaning-making as antithetical poles respectively. Clarke is an artist, a manufacturer of poisonous images—idols in Protestant terminology—, who carries poison on him (1.283ff). He woos Susan by sending her an emblem with the likeness of "a dagger sticking in a heart" (1.153); and when he is confident that he has won her, he boasts of laying "his colors to the life" and drawing "no shadows in his love" (597f). "Love is the painter's muse," he formulates his desire for Susan Mosby proudly, "That makes him frame a speaking countenance, / A weeping eye that witnesses heart's grief" (1.257–59). His words celebrate the unmediated and uncensored communication of emotion through signs of the body and the direct medium of pictures.

Michael, on the other hand, hopes to outdo Clarke by utilizing the power of written words: "I'll send from London," he boasts in dialogue with Alice, "such a taunting letter / As she [Susan] shall eat the heart he [Clarke] sent with salt / And fling the dagger at the painter's head" (1.159–61).[93] When he overhears Michael read his letter to Mistress Susan, Arden calls Clarke, Michael, and Susan a "crew of harlots all in love" (3.26) and forbids him to "write to her a word" (28). In contrast, he promised Alice to write to her from London "every other tide" (1.408). The use of the written word is easier to intercept and censor than visual symbols are. Arden's attitude to writing is

[93] However, both the verse accompanying Clarke's emblem and the text of Michael's planned letter lack in originality: the former, according to Michael, was "stolen from a painted cloth" (154), a cheaper substitute for tapestry, and the latter should be produced, not by the wooer, Michael, himself, but by a fellow who "can both write and read, and make rhyme too" (157). For the use of painted cloth, see Jeffrey L. Singman, *Daily Life in Elizabethan England* (Westport, CT, London: Greenwood Press, 1995), 80.

ambiguous. While he resists royal power in fixing his persona in the "latters patents," he judges characters from Faversham on the basis of a letter. Two of them, Michael and Susan, will be accomplices in his overthrow. This fact supports the claim that *Arden of Faversham* represents the struggle between two forms of meaning-making in the formation of identity: one is implicit, physical, and circular, while the other is discursive and linear.

7.3. The Drive toward Textuality in Black Will

Black Will testifies to the divide between the material world of the senses, on the one hand, and the Protestant belief in the literal truth of the word and the power emanating from sacred texts, on the other. At the same time, he exemplifies a shift from the former to the latter as Henry VIII powerfully prefigured it. He reminds Bradshaw with nostalgia of the position he had as a corporal in Henry's war at Boulogne when they were "fellow soldiers" (2.19f). Black Will proudly remembers his heroism of stealing "the half ox from John the victualer" and the way he "domineered with it amongst good fellows in one night" (24–26). Those days are still "not past" with him, he emphasizes, and adds that he keeps "that same honorable mind still" (28f). Black Will's indulgence in sensual experience is less honorable than Henry's initiation to knighthood. Instead of a "verge of gold" as a promise of future power, he could grab only "a cudgel stick" with which he "broke the tapster's head of the Lion," an inn, to seek immediate satisfaction in quenching his thirst: "we trolled the bowl at Sittingburgh" (61–63), he reminisces, meaning, they passed the "cup" around (62n).

Black Will still celebrates the memory of the sensual pleasure in the social and culinary opportunities the war scene offered, not the least because, besides the carousal at nights, it also gave him a sense of power. Bradshaw, who is now a goldsmith, used to be "but a base mercenary groom," Black Will recalls, who begged him, "with a curtsy to the earth," for "One snatch" (2.20f, 23f) of the meat. In the commission to murder Arden, he sees a new opportunity to rise to a yet

unexperienced sense of honor. He refuses to make a solemn promise to "effect" the "deed" (89), because, he says echoing Alice, he has "broken five hundred oaths" (3.88). Instead, he would like to be further motivated by Greene, whom he asks to "charm" him by conjuring up the sight "of gold" and to entertain him with images of Mosby swearing allegiance to him as his feudal lord and Alice as a fairy offering him riches she carries on her body. "Say," he tells Green, "thou see'st Mosby kneeling at my knees, / Offering me service for my high attempt; / And sweet Alice Arden, with a lap of crowns, / Comes with a lowly curtsy to the earth" (89–94). The images recall the medieval oath of fealty and scenes from Arthurian legends. Black Will, who fought in Henry's ambitious war at Boulogne (9.24) for advantages of dubious value,[94] realizes, long before Mosby, that he has to relive the chivalric myth that Henry did to make a campaign successful, regardless of the moral worth in its goal. At the center of his myth stands "sweet Alice Arden" rewarding him, the hero, with riches issuing forth from her "lap" (3.93), with a hint at Black Will's possible sexual ambitions.

Black Will's words at first do not possess the power to make this work in his reality. As Whigham formulates, "Will wants direct action."[95] His travesty of passages from Elizabethan tragedy and his Biblical references might have made his language sound familiar to contemporary audiences, but what makes it powerful is the life he breathes into it by his readiness to believe in its literal truth. As a travesty of Psalm 42, he renders his eagerness to kill Arden in a poetic simile: "the forlorn traveler," he begins telling Greene, "Whose lips are glued with summer's parching heat, / Ne'er longed so much to see a running brook / As I to finish Arden's tragedy" (3.99–102). Besides its metatheatrical effect, his last phrase shows a peculiar awareness in Black Will of his role in a literary genre of more than fictional significance.[96] Whigham argues that the life of "bourgeois

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[94] Loades 178.
[95] Whigham 99.
[96] Shakebag similarly expends his energy spared from the frustrated attempt at assassinating Arden in London to create bombastic poetic images. "I cannot paint my valor out with words" (3.107), he excuses himself, before he compares the mercy he would have on Arden, given "place and opportunity" (3.108), in an adynaton, to that a "starven lioness" would show "to the prey" (3.109, 111).

competence at his trade" Will dreams of is "a real fantasy" (100) for him. He sounds as if he knew that he would have to enter the world of a myth to be able to carry out the formidable task of a hero. In this respect, his undertaking seems comparable, if not in magnitude, still in nature, to that of Don Quixote.

Black Will elaborates further on the heroic narrative to develop it into a self-generating myth and names himself its protagonist: "I am the very man, / Marked in my birth hour by the Destinies, / To give an end to Arden's life on earth" (3.158). In a next step, he assigns a supporting role to Michael as a "member" in the deed who will "whet the knife / Whose edge must search the closet of his breast" (3.161f), by which he means setting a trap for Arden. To have physical access to Arden's body, his assassins first need to invent a narrative to organize their "drift." Here we witness the evolution of a poetic narrative into a myth intended from now on to control the action. Whigham claims that Will uses a "legalist language" to achieve what he calls a "self-institutionalization" (102), a "positive identity" (103). In a way parallel to how Henry VIII identified with his self in an Augustinian reflexivity and then encoded his political power in the Act of Supremacy to secure fulfillment, Will starts from a "charm[ing]" fantasy and unfolds his persona in a "highly legalist language" (102). For him, as for Michael (1.173f, 3.9), murder leads naturally to a fulfillment of desire. In terms of Orlin's combined principles of *hierarchy* and *analogy*, Black Will's heroic narrative follows the latter without observing the former. He creates his myth, as Henry did the one of his own chivalry, out of passionate desire to be empowered by it and to gain fulfillment.

7.4. Mosby

In his urge to gain power and in his sexual motivation, Mosby exhibits most clearly in the play the workings of the Henrician pattern of identity formation moving through a full sense of bodily presence toward a mythical rise to status in the framework of a narrative. He identifies with his sexuality in formulating his ideal of masculine power in an image of the "pillar" of "constancy"

(10.95, 94), a telling phallic reference to the symbol of fertility. To match Alice's expectations of Love as a god (1.101), the symbol that represents it has to be "rocks of adamant" which no "time nor place nor tempest can asunder" (101f). On the other hand, Mosby frames his desire in a narrative with elements that have been scripted for him in contemporary plays. Eugene D. Hill claims that the "narcissist Mosby derives [his] sense of self […] from the stagy royals of recent drama."[97] In the vulnerable image Mosby paints of himself to justify his strategy as a "perpetual plotter" (367), Hill identifies allusions to the familiar topos of the "'complaints' of kings."[98] To his examples from *The Spanish Tragedy* I would add a passage from Shakespeare's later *Henry V* only to show that this dramatic theme was indeed frequently reused. Here is Mosby's "complaint:"

> Well fares the man, howe'er his cates do taste,
> That tables not with foul suspicion;
> And he but pines amongst his delicates
> Whose troubled mind is stuffed with discontent.
> My golden time was when I had no gold;
> Though then I wanted, yet I slept secure. (8.7–12)

It is curious to think that Harry, a "real" monarch picks up the same motif in lamenting that the king, though blessed with "the balm, the sceptre, and the ball, / The sword, the mace, the crown imperial," etc., cannot sleep in his "bed majestical […] so soundly as the wretched slave / Who with a body filled and vacant mind / Gets him to rest."[99] Mosby, a social climber in Protestant England, begins his plot contemplating the use of a Catholic object of worship and ends up fashioning himself in a markedly dramatic discourse as a literary hero. By joining in a literary tradition, he imagines himself to be a king, a fictional one, to be sure. But he seems to be taking the fiction literally and

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[97] Eugene D. Hill, "Parody and History in 'Arden of Faversham' (1592)," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 56.4 (Autumn 1993): 359–382. 367.
[98] Raymond Chapman, "*Arden of Faversham*: Its Interest Today," *English* 11 (1956): 15–17. 16, qtd. in Hill 366.
[99] Shakespeare, *Henry V*, *The Norton Shakespeare. Based on the Oxford Edition*, eds. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York, London: W W Norton, 1997) 1454–1521. 4.1.242f, 249–52.

thus turns it into a myth with himself in the role of the hero. In a way, this relapse from fiction to myth is similar to the way king Henry VIII formed his own identity when, as Starkey says, he "would live the fantasy," the "tales of knights and chivalry […] for real" and when "inhabited in his imagination and dreams" the "world of chivalry and romance," the tales "of disguises and transformations, of hermits and kings."[100]

Mosby is aware of the value, not only in his own desire, but in the desire of others he can use as a resource to fuel his own drive to position. He first proposes that Clarke draw Alice's "counterfeit, / That Arden may by gazing on it perish" (1.234f). When Susan announces they have "grown onto a match" (603) with Clarke (which will later be inconspicuously dropped), Mosby taps into their love and uses the fact that his sister is at his "dispose" (606) to stipulate a condition. He commissions a "crucifix impoisonèd, / That whoso look upon it should wax blind / And with the scent be stifled, that ere long / He should die poisoned that did view it well" (612–15). Clarke, for the sake of Susan's love, undertakes to manufacture the idolatrous weapon: "Though I am loath, because it toucheth life, / Yet, rather or I'll leave sweet Susan's love, / I'll do it" (618–20). Murder, indeed, figures as a precondition for renewal,[101] and the energy to commit it issues from sexual desire.

Mosby is driven by a genuine sense of insufficiency and anticipation. He has, as he says, "a drift" (1.590).[102] While Alice acknowledges his efforts to rise from a lowly origin saying, "whatsoe'er my Mosby's father was, / Himself is valued gentle by his worth" (8.144f), both Franklin and Arden try to suppress Mosby's ambition by connecting him in designation to his humble origins. This heightens Mosby's sense of reality and enables him to restrain his desire temporarily and postpone the hoped-for fulfillment. In a gesture that reminds us of Henry's self-restraint and his claim to a

[100] Starkey, *Henry VIII: Mind of a Tyrant. Episode 1: Prince*.
[101] In the second chapter of her *From Ritual to Romance*, Jessie L. Weston investigates the connection between the removal of the disabled king and the restoration of the Waste Land to fertility in versions of the Grail legend. Doubleday Anchor Books Ser. A125 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1957) 11–22.
[102] At 579 he calls their common plot with Alice to murder Arden "our drifts."

"high moral ground" (Bernard 8), Mosby strives to achieve an agreement between words and deeds: to love Alice while Arden is alive is for him unacceptable. He swears a Catholic oath to Arden saying, "as I intend to live / With God and His elected saints in heaven, / I never meant more to solicit her, / And that she knows, and all the world shall see" (1.327–30). After Arden has survived the attempted poisoning and left for London, Alice encourages Mosby to continue their love "albeit he [Arden] live." Mosby, however, protests: "It is unpossible, for I have sworn / Never to hereafter to solicit thee / Or, whilst he lives, once more importune thee" (429–32). While "oaths are words, and words is wind, / And wind is mutable" in Alice's stark opposition to a Protestant belief in the truthfulness of words, Mosby insists on keeping his oath "unbroken whilst he [Arden] lives" (437f, 441).

Henry's attitude to sexual fulfillment is exemplary here as well: it was in compliance with St Augustine's view of the maturation of the Christian personality we saw earlier in this chapter. Having had his own experience of what Taylor calls the Augustinian "inwardness of radical reflexivity"[103] and having found his own truth within himself, he recognized the superiority of reason to sense as, for example, his letters to Anne testify. In one of them he thanked her for "the suppressing of your inutile vain thoughts and fantasies with the bridle of reason." In doing so, he used the phrase "conformableness to reason" (Bernard 6), which reminds us of the first of Perkins's principles, namely conformity to a higher will. When he staked "a claim to the high moral ground" (8), Henry saw "God, not Anne, […] as the arbiter of his desires" (6). And so does Mosby, too, at least until he strikes a deal with Clarke, the "compound[er] by art" (1.611) of poisonous images, to quietly move Arden out of the way. Instead of a dependence on immediate gratification "without control" (275), Mosby, at least temporarily, exhibits a Henrician sense of opportunity (kairos) and planning.

[103] Taylor 131.

7.5. Arden

Thomas Arden receives his persona, so to speak, in the mail. As Frank Whigham formulates, he "gets his entitlement […] to the Abbey lands, by express law, not by customary ontological possession" (77). His friend, Franklin delivers it to him probably on vellum, penned by a scribe in official hand, with the Great Seal showing the full figure of the king enthroned, and signed both by the Duke of Somerset as Lord Protector and king Edward VI. The grant binds Arden to "the lands of the Abbey of Faversham" (1.5) in the eyes of every other character in the play except his own. Identifying with his duty to the crown would require that Arden accept and act out the persona the letters patents assign to him.[104] However, he asserts his distance from the reason of state by insisting on having an unstructured identity of an inherited, aristocratic essence. Anticipating that they will reciprocate, he acknowledges Alice's and Mosby's identity to be similarly "of one piece."[105] When they approach him, as Alice says, "arm in arm" (12.67) in Scene 13, he takes it as an expression of their genuine affection. He can process the irony, however, when Alice explains it to him: they did it, she says, "but merrily to try thy patience" (13.95). Although in a sense it is true, Arden cannot conceptualize a layered identity. As a result, he becomes the victim of his own essentialism, which demands that any discrepancy between a discursive persona and a heartfelt self must be explained away.

While he is expected to be the watchful eye and the executive of the state in the country, Arden is rather anxious about being an object of vision himself. His position, Julie R. Schutzman formulates, "shifts from surveyor to object of surveillance."[106] As long as he suffers from not being recognized as an Ovidian lover and a hereditary nobleman by Alice and Mosby, on whom his sense of identity primarily depends, he is vulnerable to his own fantasies about what other people might

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[104] Leanore Lieblein argues that Arden betrays "his social responsibility" (186). In the sense of romance, he is a disabled king, who is in the way of the renewal of the Waste Land. See Weston 11–22.
[105] This is how as A. C. Bradley characterizes Othello. *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on* Hamlet*,* Othello*,* King Lear*,* Macbeth. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992. 163.
[106] Schutzman 304.

think of him. He imagines himself as a blank screen on which anyone can project images at least as bad as the offenses he himself is not determined enough to attribute clearly to Alice and Mosby: "Her faults, methink, are painted in my face, / For every searching eye to overread," he complains in an outburst to Franklin. "And Mosby's name," he adds, "a scandal unto mine, / Is deeply trenchèd in my blushing brow" (4.14–17).[107] While he thought he could ignore the persona that the patents prescribed for him, considering it incompatible with his genuine identity, now he cannot dispel the notion that anyone can impose one on him. His own skin becomes the vellum itself: he imagines a "botcher['s]" (1.25, 316) name written over his own forehead.

Although he expresses his death wish already in his first words in the play, to be ready to die, Arden has to accept his role as a "member" in what Dolan terms the "subordinates' plots,"[108] that is, a conglomerate of mythic narratives, authored by Mosby, Alice, and Black Will separately to remove him. Black Will's oral poetry and Mosby's fantasy of deposing him will eventually impose the persona on Arden he was reluctant to assume. When he thinks about "Mosby's name" eclipsing his in his "brow" of shame, he senses that Mosby will, at once, take the place of his self as well ("that base Mosby doth usurp my room") and that he has no means to defend himself: Mosby's "triumph," Arden says, "lies" in his, that is, Arden's, heart and "will not out till wretched Arden dies" (4.29f, 32f). He senses the time of his life running "away" (37) toward the point when he might be freed from dishonor. He averts his eye from "the open world," as Franklin says, and looks "up towards the heavens […] for redress of wrong" (46–48). This sounds similar to what Arden himself had already said in the first scene, about his wish not to see the obvious signs of his wife's infidelity that "offend mine eyes" and to his desire that, instead of "this vale of heaven / The earth hung over my head and covered me" (1.12–14).

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[107] In a parallel image, Alice will be ashamed of carrying Mosby's "lowborn name" in her "forehead […] engraven" (8.77, 76).

[108] Dolan 332. When Dolan claims that these are "*the* plot," she seems to disregard the possibility that Arden's murder evolves as Franklin's plot; Franklin knowingly lets it happen and sums it up in a coherent master narrative retrospectively as prosecutor at the end of Scene 14 and in the Epilogue.

Instead of acting on his estate as the observant, controlling eye of the court, Arden becomes increasingly paralyzed as the object of vision himself. He even dreams about being caught in a net, like a deer, and being identified by a herdsman as "the game" (6.19) of a hunt. His life has turned into a nightmare, so that when he awakes, he is still not sure whether he "waked or no" (29). He believes his dreams "oftentimes […] presage too true" (37), as if he could not distinguish clearly between reality and imagination, or he perceived his life in terms of the fulfilment of fate, not his own will. Arden is gradually reduced to a body, a hunted animal. Since he refuses to follow the Protestant focus on the power of the written word, Arden falls victim to the mounting force of non-textual modes of representation in the play's Faversham: visual symbols in Catholicism, idolatry, the direct control of passion over the body, and the pagan worship of fertility. All this appears lumped together as a foil to Protestant textuality which emerges against this background as its own past from which it distinguishes itself and its source of energy.

Arden believes in the truthfulness of bodily gestures as symbols that do not merely express or point to some meaning but carry meaning in themselves. He tries to convince himself that Alice has genuinely "changèd from the old humor / Of her wonted frowardness, / And seeks by fair means to redeem old faults" (13.62–64). When he imagines himself arriving earlier than she expects him, Alice appears to him in a picture as "playing the cook" (73). In fact, Alice is planning to confront her husband with a bold display of her unfaithfulness "marching arm in arm" (12.67) with Mosby, to provoke him to fight in jealousy and then to have him killed by Shakebag and Black Will in the commotion. When Arden meets them, he demands that they "Untwine those arms!" (13.79). To restore her image of the faithful wife, Arden thinks, she only has to let go of Mosby's arm.

Although meaning is inherent for him in its representations as images, Arden is ready to be instructed verbally in the interpretation of what he sees. He listens while Alice rattles off a baffling list of images and the allegedly wrong conclusions Arden has drawn from them:

> If I be merry, thou straightway thinks me light;

If sad, thou sayest the sullens trouble me;

If well attired, thou thinks I will be gadding;

If homely, I seem sluttish in thine eye. (13.108–111)

The ambiguity of visual images leaves Arden dumbfounded. "But is it for truth that neither thou nor he / Intended'st malice in your misdemeanor?" (114f), he asks helplessly, and submits to Alice's explanation: "Impose me penance and I will perform it, / For in thy discontent I find a death" (119f). What is more, Arden is eager to conciliate Mosby to prove he has learned Alice's lesson and relinquished his claim for an independent explication of what bodily gestures mean. While Mosby teased him with a signs of cuckolding, which Arden now learns were ambiguous, Alice demands that Arden confess his "fault" to Mosby in unequivocal verbal terms.

Franklin attempts, in vain, to train Arden in how to use words purposefully to attain a woman's heart. "Entreat her fair," he recommends and explains the performative force of discourse saying, "sweet words are fittest engines / To raze the flint walls of a woman's breast" (1.46f). Arden, however, is more apt to express his own feeling of disappointment than to impress Alice and change her mood of constant resentment. He speaks as if Alice has expelled him from the blissful union in marital love, which only she can restore between them. Instead of fighting to regain her, he gives in to Alice's confident denial of a discrepancy between her word and gesture at night when she, as he says, called "on Mosby in thy sleep" and "caught me about the neck" (66, 70). When Alice assures him of the alleged harmony of her words and gesture, Arden accepts her interpretation with relief: "I know thou lovest me well" (75). Rather than using words as "weapons,"[109] as Alice does, to influence Alice's emotions, Arden surrenders to her promise that there could be no "mistake" (72) in her embrace. He accepts Alice's words that deny the irony. If Mosby utilizes most successfully the Henrician pattern of a layered identity, Arden is the least well equipped among the characters with a discursive armor to protect his sense of self.

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[109] Jackson 252.

When he tastes the poison Alice administered to him in the broth, for example, he asks Franklin for "mithridate," "a poison antidote" (1.383 and n) to, as he says, "prevent the worst" (384). At the same time, he assures Alice saying, "I mistrust not thee" (391). Whenever he falls into the discomfort of disbelief resulting from his direct sensation and subsequently overcomes it by holding on to Alice's words, he experiences an almost cathartic relief. When, in the wake of the unsuccessful first attempt at murdering him, Alice assures him that "never woman loved her husband better / Than I do thee," he asks her to "Cease to complain, / Lest that in tears I answer thee again" (393–96). Arden expects to experience truthfulness in Alice and agreement with her in terms of the direct, bodily, iconic communication of emotions. He repeats this cycle a last time when Alice and Mosby meet him on his way home in Scene 13 and finds peace and comfort in an anesthetic state of acquiescence, ready for the offering. Arden is easily misguided by Alice's verbal interpretation of her and Mosby's gestures, because he himself is an uncritical believer in essences.

7.6. Franklin

At the end of Scene 13, Franklin leaves his friend to his fate, saying that he is "bewitched" and driven by the "devil" (13.152f). Franklin is absent for the duration of the ritual murder and emerges again only at the end of Scene 14, carrying the towel and the knife, the murder weapons. He has found Arden's body; he has seen Mosby's and Greene's footprints in the snow and spotted "rushes" from the house in Arden's "slipshoe" (14.400). He knew what was awaiting Arden when Arden left to appease Mosby, whom he injured, and he forewarned him (13.135f, 143f). Although he failed to prevent the fulfillment of Arden's tragedy, as a government representative, he is the first everywhere to pick up clues and to collect evidence. Did he, before the feast of reconciliation, to which he was invited (14.38) but where he did not appear, give up trying to persuade Arden to prove Alice's guilt and judge her? Did he decide instead to rise above the events and become the judge himself? Did he foresee the events and let them happen? Do they serve his interest? Lieblein

calls him "a disinterested friend who serves as the play's center of moral judgment." In him, she says, "the play's point of view emerges."[110] He acts as a detective guiding the search and drawing logical conclusions from his observations, but he could foresee the events before they took place: "look about this chamber where we are," he tells the Mayor,

> And you shall find part of his guiltless blood;
> For in his slipshoe did I find some rushes,
> Which argueth he was murdered in this room. (15.398–401)

Franklin even knows Mosby can be apprehended at the "Flower-de-Luce" (14.413f). He reads signs and attaches meaning to them according to a narrative that he has seen unfolding and that he let reach its conclusion by its own momentum. He seems to sum up events in retrospect, like a chronicler, with insight; but in fact he allowed it all to happen, so that he can draw predictable conclusions. Arden's death seems to serve the purpose of his narrative that subsumes and overwrites all other plots in the play, like Arden's "letters patents […] cut off" "all former grants" (1.460, 462f), as Greene puts it. Franklin can now clean up the Faversham pocket of resistance to the written law of state. He sums up the story of executions that exterminate agents of chaotic local energies, pagan worship, and Catholic idolatry, once they have eliminated the unreliable representative of the crown.

All the circumstantial evidence does not prove Franklin's charge that it is Alice who has "shed" (406) Arden's blood.[111] She does not confess and does not deny: "I loved him more than all the world beside" (14.410), she says. However, if she herself does not come up with a coherent narrative of what happened, the authorities representing the realm will. Alice is not willing to formulate her own story in words and probably not capable of doing so. Her own experience of being compelled to subject her body, her self, to a marriage vow that sounded empty and alien to

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[110] Lieblein 184.
[111] Orlin comes to the conclusion that "a criminal investigation" "in the archives," "independent of […] fictionalized" "contemporary narratives," would not "lead us to indict Alyce Ardern" (20).

her,[112] does not have room in the emerging narrative the authorities are now constructing with Franklin as its narrator in the Epilogue.

8. Conclusion

All the rebel characters, Alice, Mosby, and Black Will, have a reason to envy Arden, who would willingly be their ally, for living the dream of being "of one piece," for conceptualizing his identity as an inalienable essence. However, they act in a way to further and, in fact, enforce the Henrician split of identity. They kill Arden as a sign, a reminder, of what gets lost in this split: the rather illusionary unity of identity, of self and persona. In this sense, the act of sacrificing Arden is symbolic. His presence in Faversham as an example of being "by birth a gentleman of blood," a "gentle gentleman," is as intolerable as withholding property rights by royal patent. Arden does the former by conviction and the latter by fate. These two attitudes result from the two components of his identity, but he fails to see them and acknowledge them as such and insists on being pure self.

In this chapter I have shown that telling details of the political connection between the real-life murder of Ardern and the court of Edward VI have been suppressed already in the first written accounts, but never entirely erased. Humanist historiography continued focusing on the business of state and glossing over the way it achieved a semblance of narrative coherence. Henry VIII took advantage of the power of the written word when he argued that his legislative and political reformation was a logical step issuing from the documented history of England. He incorporated those texts into his own strategic effort to build his powerful public persona.

The historic Thomas Ardern rose to wealth and power as a result of Henry's Dissolution under his reign. His dependence on Alice, a practitioner of subversive religious worship, however, turns the dramatic character Arden into a potential partaker in the signifying economy the

[112] Alice admits she has "sworn" and "given my hand unto him in the church," but she dismisses the validity of the verbal promise saying, "oaths are words, and words is wind, / And wind is mutable" (1.435–38).

Protestant reformation strives to overcome and suppress: a disorderly conglomerate of pagan fertility cult, Catholic idolatry, and sexual and murderous desire. Consequently, as a representative of state under Henry's successor, Arden fails to execute the political responsibilities the written entitlement from the court entrusts to him. Thus, he represents a crack, a flaw in the narrative of state and, therefore, even his friend, the loyal Franklin, abandons him.

However, Alice, Mosby, Clarke, and Black Will, the local agents of the uncontrollable forces of passion, fabricate their own myths to achieve fulfillment and to rival the official master narrative issuing from the "letters patents." They too, like Henry, take their own desire and translate it into their own different scenarios, originating in fertility myth, contemporary drama, poisoning magic, and romance narrative, respectively. Since he insists on the inherent meaning of symbols, Arden cannot easily interpret it in discourse, and he cannot tolerate a tension between the two. As a result, ultimately he falls victim to a simplistic explanation of Alice's bodily gestures. Similar to Henry, Arden's murderers follow the Augustinian pattern of identity formation: they retain the power of passion in their selves, rise above it to a higher moral point of view, and build a discursive persona of a bricolage of strategically presented and literally interpreted texts and narratives. While they have to fall because their narratives are not compatible with the official order of signification and worship, Arden "muss sterben"[113] because he does not build up a layered identity of self and persona.

[113] *Arden muss sterben* (*Arden Must Die*), opera composed by Alexander Goehr, libretto Erich Fried, trans. Geoffrey Skelton, Sadler's Wells Theatre, London, April 17, 1974, the New Opera Company, conductor, Meredith Davies; producer, Jonathan Miller. The above information comes from Christopher Shaw, "'Arden Must Die'," rev. of *Arden Must Die*, *Tempo*, New Series, 110 (Sep. 1974): 42f. *JSTOR* 20 Apr. 2014.

Chapter 5

Language and the Perception of Identity in *Othello*

My primary aim in this chapter is to answer two main and interrelated questions that have intrigued critics of Shakespeare's *Othello* from the earliest times of the play's performance history. The first one is what gives Iago power to, as Othello formulates, "ensnare[…] my soul and body?"[1] The second problem complements it, because it concerns Othello's susceptibility to be "ensnared" (310): what makes him believe the unbelievable? Or does he, indeed, believe, against all probability, that Desdemona has been unfaithful? This is how I formulate the problems, and the answer is likely to question the ingrained assumption that Othello kills Desdemona for love, out of jealousy, as "one that loved not wisely but too well" (5.2.254). Here, as elsewhere, it is not judicious to take Othello's words about himself at face value, as F. R. Leavis reminds us.[2] To shake at least, if not to dispel, a common and stubborn supposition about Othello's perception of, and attitude toward, Desdemona, as I hope my answers will, would be to change our sense of the nature of the tragedy in *Othello*. In his monograph and comprehensive study *Othello and Interpretive Traditions*, to which I am indebted, Edward Pechter happens to subscribe to this fallacious assumption, and he sums it up stating, "Othello is in love."[3] It is easier to refute this statement, based on the very evidence Pechter uses, than to fight a long-established stereotype. So, I will proceed in this order, taking Pechter's claim first and then present my interpretation of the problem in *Othello*.

Pechter bases his claim on Othello's language, while he ignores the immediate circumstances of the Moor's utterance. He contrasts the complex "Latinate" words and syntax in Othello's description of his unmarried condition with "a simple and direct expression of affection"

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[1] William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. Kim F. Hall (Boston, New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007) 5.2.310. All quotations from *Othello* are from this edition, unless otherwise indicated.
[2] F. R. Leavis, "Diabolic Intellect and the Noble Hero: A Note on Othello," *Scrutiny* 6 (December 1937): 259–283. 276.
[3] Edward Pechter, Othello *and Interpretive Traditions* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 1999) 40.

(40) in the words "I love the gentle Desdemona" (1.2.25). Only because he does love her, Pechter asserts in empathy, can Othello do what he wants Iago to believe is a sacrifice, namely, put his "unhoused free condition […] into circumscription and confine" (1.2.26f) for her sake. This difference in grammar underlines the profoundness of the change Othello had made before the action of the play started, Pechter suggests, from "the freedom of his soldierly celibacy […] for something better" (40). The lines are "beautiful" (40) indeed, but we should not overlook that Othello utters them on his wedding night, chatting with his disgruntled ancient in the street, apparently still "unhoused" and "free," while he now seems to feel obliged to appease him, even at the expense of leaving his fresh bride, who took more than ordinary risks for this union, alone at an inn, in what must be "circumscription and confine," indeed, for a young virgin, who has presumably never spent a night away from home. The irony is striking.

Considering that, throughout the action, Iago takes advantage of Othello's bad conscience for letting him down, for selfish reasons, in his hopes of due promotion, it is unlikely that Iago would take Othello's above words at face value. Iago's own cynical attitude to his marriage to Emilia and the misogyny he expresses in Act 2, scene 1 at the harbor in Cyprus, before Othello arrives, should warn us that he probably "knows more, much more than he unfolds" (3.3.260). We should not be easily duped, either. That, on his wedding night, Othello speaks of his own marriage as a burden and sacrifice might not be flattering to the bride he has temporarily abandoned, but it fulfills the criteria for the maxims of Agreement and Sympathy,[4] terms well-established in linguistic pragmatics and discourse analysis. In his words, Othello "exaggerate[s] agreement" with Iago and he might even aim at evoking his sympathy based on the underlying negative presupposition

[4] Bronisław Malinowski termed "the communion of words […] to establish links of fellowship" "*phatic communion*" in "Phatic Communion," *Communication in Face to Face Interaction: Selected Readings*, eds. Laver, John, and Sandy Hutcheson, (Harmondsworth, UK, etc.: Penguin Books, 1972) 150f. Geoffrey N. Leech elaborated on the Maxims of Politeness in his *Principles of Pragmatics* (London and New York: Longman, 1983) 138f. More recently, Bethan Benwell and Elizabeth Stokoe discuss them in *Discourse and Identity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006) 274.

concerning the state of a married man. In making the confession in the given circumstances, therefore, Othello is more likely to attempt to establish common ground with Iago than with Desdemona.

In a more general sense, the belief that Othello is in love with Desdemona has obliged critics to go to extreme lengths in explaining how this love can transform into murderous hatred—an undertaking which is not supported by convincing evidence. And still, Othello's "I love the gentle Desdemona" has garnered more attention and credibility, and still causes confusion as a result, than Desdemona's refutation of it in protesting, in the very real shadow of death, that "That death's unnatural that kills for loving" (5.2.44). Desdemona cannot reconcile killing with loving, and I think we would fail to pay due respect to the meaning of these words if we tried. Othello obviously has some interest in believing, or at least pretending to believe, in Desdemona's guilt, if he makes the effort to do so; and the effort must be considerable, since he must know that what Iago offers to him to believe has no foundation in any real fact. However, this impossibility strikes us as probable in the sense of Aristotle's recipe for tragedians,[5] and this is the mystery that forces critics to focus on the Temptation Scene (3.3), where Othello seems to believe what he must not believe. This chapter attempts to unravel this mystery by focusing on the two main questions that have constantly occupied critics of *Othello*: what is the source of Iago's power over Othello, and what is the reason for Othello's vulnerability to that power?

1. The Problem in *Othello*

In her "Introduction" to *Contemporary Critical Essays* on *Othello*, Lena Cowen Orlin divides the history of the reception of the play into two main periods. For a long time, she argues, emotional reactions dominated audience and critical responses, while in recent decades *Othello*, providing

[5] Aristotle, *Poetics*, transl. S. H. Butcher, *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Arts* by S. H. Butcher, 4th ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 1951) XXIV. 7–10, 95, pp. 93–97.

material for "a case study," as she formulates, yielded to questions raised in all of the newly emerging "politicized readings" like "gender, power, sexuality, [and] race."[6] Character criticism in the earlier period of the history of *Othello*'s reception seems to have focused on two persistent and closely related issues: the question of how Iago is capable of impressing other characters, most importantly Othello, as "honest" while being in fact a villain and the problem of what makes Othello vulnerable to Iago's insinuation of Desdemona's infidelity in the Temptation Scene in Act 3, scene 3. Before trying to answer these questions in terms of perception and identity, and of the perception of identity, in the hierarchical Iago–Othello–Desdemona–Cassio quadrangle, I would like to consider how the criticism conceptualizes these two problems: that of the power in Iago others refer to as his "honesty" and of Othello's vulnerability to it.

The initial attention in the criticism to Desdemona shifted to Othello and finally settled on Iago. The mesmerizing effect of the tragic fate of Othello and Desdemona urged critics early on to question the forces that determine it. Once we had lost our taste for the murderous streak in Othello's noble heroism in A. C. Bradley as the source of the tragic denouement, we became more engaged in trying to resolve the intellectual mystery of Iago.[7] However, our interest in the enigma of Iago has not entirely eliminated the emotional appeal of the play. According to Edward Pechter, we want both to suffer with Othello and to act with Iago, and then again be punished for it (29). It seems, we tend to see Iago and Othello in tandem and understand Othello's character more in association with that of Iago than with that of Desdemona. Othello's vulnerability might arise from his perception of Iago as "honest," which would entail that, in the context of the play, the two concepts, Othello's vulnerability and Iago's "honesty," cannot be defined in isolation from one another. However, critics have often tried to explore Iago's identity independently of, and prior to,

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[6] Lena Cowen Orlin. "Introduction." *Othello: Contemporary Critical Essays*. Ed. Lena Cowen Orlin (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) 1–21. 1.

[7] Pechter 28f. F. R. Leavis claims that already "from Coleridge down, Iago—his motivation or his motivelessness—has commonly been, in commentaries on the play, the main focus of attention" (261).

Othello's perception of it and without considering if Othello might have affected it or even shaped it. Still, a quest for Iago's motivation independently of that of Othello has never yielded a satisfactory explanation.[8] Even though the ancient has more lines in the text than the protagonist and eponymous hero, Othello,[9] Iago is still a character in a play titled *Othello*, not *Iago*. What hidden interests, what principles does Iago represent?

2. The Question of Power and Vulnerability in the Criticism

The earliest extant eye witness account of a performance of *Othello* comes from Oxford in 1610; this report focuses only on the immediate effect of the suffering of Desdemona on the spectator.[10] The first mention of Iago from the 1640s calls him a "rogue" and, besides a "villainous humor," attributes to him a power to "persuade[…] Othello to his jealousy" (Salgādo 47). Robert Gould's poem from 1689, similarly, points out the ability of "cursed Iago" to "Work up the noble Moor to Jealousy." It calls Iago cunning and represents his effect on Othello in a metaphor of feeding him with "poison" (Salgādo 58). Thomas Rymer repeats this assessment almost word for word and adds that Iago works Othello up "to be Jealous."[11] The earliest critics of the play try to grasp Iago's character in its one-way effect on Othello, and posit him as the origin of evil in the play.

Regarding Iago's character as an evil influence goes hand in hand with considering it duplicitous. Rymer calls Iago "a close, dissembling, false, insinuating rascal, instead of an open-hearted, frank, plain-dealing soldier, a character" he says we have known from tragedy, comedy,

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[8] Samuel Taylor Coleridge's proverbial phrase indicates the difficulty to fathom the depth of Iago's character. Iago's soliloquy closing the first act, Coleridge famously observes, "shows the motive-hunting of motiveless malignity." Terence Hawkes, ed. *Coleridge on Shakespeare* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1969) 190.
[9] Orlin 2. R. A. Foakes's statistics show that Iago has "'43 per cent of the lines' in the first two acts compared to '32.58 per cent of the words in the play' as a whole." "The Descent of Iago: Satire, Ben Jonson, and Shakespeare's *Othello*," *Shakespeare and His Contemporaries: Essays in Comparison*. Ed. E. J. A. Honigmann (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986) 16–30. 29. Qtd. in Pechter 54.
[10] Gāmini Salgādo, *Eyewitnesses of Shakespeare: First Hand Accounts of Performances 1590–1890*. London: Sussex University Press, 1975) 30.
[11] "*Iago* by shrugs, half words, and ambiguous reflections, works *Othello* up to be Jealous." Thomas Rymer, *A Short View of Tragedy; It's Original, Excellency, and Corruption* (London: Richard Baldwin, 1693) 118. *Early English Books Online* 15 Jan. 2014.

and from "Nature" "for some thousands of years in the World" (Salgādo 93f). William Hazlitt in 1814 calls Iago similarly "an accomplished hypocrite" and refers to his character as "odious" (Salgādo 262). The word "hypocrite" suggests that Iago's character is double-layered, that the impression it creates of itself in others is false, and that behind it, like behind a screen or a mask, lurks its putative true identity. The critic of the *Morning Herald*, under the influence of the same production that inspired Hazlitt,[12] observes contradictions of this kind in Iago. His "rude and blunt honesty," he claims, "is not real" and his "candour […] merely affected." Iago, "the villain," here appears to have a twofold character: he seems to "deceive everyone except himself" (Salgādo 265). In spite of this perceived elusiveness in Iago's identity, the critic tries to grasp its essence in attributes such as "cold, and designing, and unvaried in its nature." Even more surprisingly, he states that it requires "a deep and comprehensive knowledge of human nature" (Salgādo 264) to impersonate it on the stage, suggesting that Iago, somehow in his rigid, calculating, and merciless appearance, exemplifies that "human nature." In spite of the premise of hollowness on which he bases his characterization of Iago, the critic insists that the actor should be able to maintain "a distinct feeling" with which he can "unite and give identity to the portrait" (Salgādo 265) onstage. Even though they experience Iago's surface persona only, to call him "false," "hypocritical," and "deceptive," they have to assume a core behind the mask. This is a remarkable presupposition critics do not account for.

The theme of evil persuasion, first sounded in the 1640s as I indicated above, continues to dominate the critical opinion of the character of Iago, and it certainly complements the axiom that Othello is, at least initially, in love. The first account of a production of the play I referred to emphasizes the way Desdemona affected a spectator. Nonetheless, Iago does not provoke such direct emotions in critics, perhaps because his involvement with the action onstage is also indirect, detached. Critics refer to him rather in terms of the effect he has on his "audience" onstage,

[12] Edmund Kean played Iago at the Drury Lane on May 9, 1814 (Salgādo 262–65).

primarily on Othello, without considering the possibility that his character and sense of identity, too, evolve, and that he goes through a crucial process of transformation in the first scene of the play which he attributes to his disappointment in his general. In connection with a Drury Lane production in 1817, the *European Magazine* uses the verb to "tempt" in the context of the ancient's influence on Othello and represents his machinations in terms that might remind one of the way John Milton characterizes those of Satan in *Paradise Lost* as far as they aim at putting to the test and corrupting the innocence of Adam and Eve.[13] Iago, the review goes, "tempts the unsuspicious Moor to jealousy, and works upon his ardent nature with the suspicion of Desdemona's honesty."[14] Charles Dickens, in the second half of the nineteenth century, holds Iago capable of "dissect[ing] his master's soul," so that Othello does not even realize it, and of "overpower[ing]" (Salgādo 269) Emilia without the semblance of ill will. Dickens seems to be the first critic to suggest that Iago harms other characters without being passionate about it.

Iago's effect of persuasion on his "audience" onstage is thus intimately related to the perception that he is duplicitous. Accordingly, if Iago is a "hypocrite," as Hazlitt and his fellow reviewer claimed in the 19th century, he is one not only in the modern sense of the word but also according to the meaning of the ancient Greek ὑποκριτής (*hupokritēs*), that is, actor, player. Moreover, as far as he gives voice to Othello's, Roderigo's, and even Cassio's motives, supports their hidden potentials, and helps them unfold their identity, Iago does not initiate these intrinsic forces but merely responds to them and by reflecting them augments them and drives them to an absurd conclusion: he is the interpreter, the expounder, which is another meaning of the same ancient Greek noun, *hupokritēs*. Does Iago, when, as he says, his "Muse labors" (2.1.129), introduce something alien to Othello, or does he act as a midwife helping "events in the womb of time"

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[13] A. C. Bradley would protest saying, "to compare Iago with the Satan of *Paradise Lost* seems almost absurd, so immensely does Shakespeare's man exceed Milton's Fiend in evil." *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on* Hamlet*,* Othello*,* King Lear*,* Macbeth (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992) 178.
[14] Salgādo 266.

(1.3.355) unfold, a desire in Othello take shape? In any case, Iago's perspective on Othello seems to be of a different order from the way Othello sees himself. While Iago's perspective on Desdemona as an adulteress attracts Othello, Othello's efforts to appropriate it introduces a curious split in his perception of who Desdemona is and thus perhaps even in his perception of his own identity. In his testimony in the trial scene (1.3), Desdemona emerges as a compassionate virgin, an object of desire and Othello's selfless patron, a worldly embodiment of the Virgin Mary, an emblematic figure in Venetian iconography from the day of the City's foundation,[15] while she appears to Othello, in an astounding perceptual delusion, the "cunning whore of Venice" (4.2.93) in the brothel scene. Is this the same Othello who said he "loved her" (1.3.170)? Or was his love flawed from the beginning? So, what makes it vulnerable to Iago's insinuation?

2.1. Iago Larger than Life

Critics I referred to above approach the problem of Iago's identity within the strict limits of character criticism. A. C. Bradley from 1904,[16] however, is perhaps the first critic who suspects larger than merely personal forces behind Iago's intrigue.[17] Coleridge still judges Iago's character in terms of "truth" and "falsehood,"[18] but Bradley acknowledges Iago's "extraordinary" personal "skill" in weaving and controlling the plot,[19] as if in some sense he was not a part of it. Bradley also calls attention to the force of the "intrigue" itself as a mechanism that, apart from the effect of character, also contributes to the catastrophe. The "part played by accident," he points out, "accentuates the

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[15] Venice was founded on March 25, the day of the Annunciation, in 421, and Venice consequently "adopted the Virgin Mary as special patroness." David Rosand, *Myths of Venice: The Figuration of a State* (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001) 12, 13.
[16] John Russell Brown, "Introduction to the Third Edition," *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth* by A. C. Bradley (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992) xiii–xxxiii. xiv.
[17] According to Orlin, A. C. Bradley's criticism of *Othello* commences the modern era of the play's reception, and his approach influenced our understanding of it to the 1980s and possibly beyond (2).
[18] Hawkes 189.
[19] This significant shift from the attention to the truthfulness in the character to his power to shape the dramatic situation will be followed by an explication of this change from truth conditions to performative acts in the philosophy of language initiated by John Langshaw Austin's *How to do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

feeling of fate" (154) which even Othello has to respect. For example, Bradley says, Othello could ruin Iago's scheme by asking a simple question—but then he does not, which, along with the other "accident[s]" (154) in the plot, "seems to us quite natural," he explains, because "so potent is the art of the dramatist." Bradley concludes that in *Othello*, as in *Oedipus Tyrannus*, "fortune" or "fate has taken sides with villainy" (155). In his interpretation, fate appears like a force quite detached from the conscious intentions not only of Othello but of the other characters as well, framing and limiting them, and functioning as an artistic device Shakespeare applies to the plot.

In spite of his understanding of Iago's exceptional position in the plot, Bradley still continues the search for the "inner man" in the character. His contradictory critical impulses allow us a glimpse into the emptiness of Iago's character when viewed in itself, in isolation from others, most importantly from Othello, and, at the same time, relate it to some substance: Iago's "insight […] into human nature" (187), Bradley argues, exhausts itself in his "lordship of the will" (188), of "his inner world" (200), but he admits that "there never was […] any violent storm" in Iago to be controlled" (186f) in the first place. Iago does "frightful things," he claims, without being driven by any kind of passion (192) or "ill-will" (193), and "that is the very horror of him" (192). Bradley seems to be on the brink of admitting that the problem of motivation in Iago eludes his grip as long as he considers it in itself. He attributes to Iago a "definite creed," he even sums it up as an "absolute egoism" which lies "wholly outside the world of morality" (188), but then he adds that any inward value in other characters "annoys" Iago (190). This points toward the possible object or cause of the repulsion in Iago and suggests that Iago cannot be, after all, only a source of influence. He must be influenced himself by events and other characters.[20]

It is curious to consider if Othello represents such an "annoying" inward value for Iago, what the nature of that value is, and how it affects him. If we found reference to this in the criticism,

[20] Professor Richard Hardin comments on this saying that the "actor" Iago, as Shakespeare's Richard III, belongs to the Plautine celever slave class, a major figure in Renaissance metadrama. Personal communication.

it should bring us closer to an understanding of at least the first of the questions with which we began about the secret of Iago's power over this value and perhaps even of the other one about the weakness in Othello that forces him to yield up that value. Bradley sees Othello as "exceptionally noble and trustful" (149), a man "who was indeed 'great of heart'" (151) and whom Iago can ruin only with a "knowledge of Othello's character" and with "an elaborate plot" (152) at his disposal. In his famous response, however, F. R. Leavis attacked the Bradleian binary of "the noble Moor" and "the devilish cunning of Iago," the pattern of the fall of "a nearly faultless hero" caused by "external evil."[21] Leavis attempts to move the focus of attention, which, he claims, since Coleridge has shifted unduly to Iago, back to Othello. Most importantly, he argues that Othello's "immediate surrender to Iago" indicates that his "trust […] can never have been in Desdemona" (263). "Iago's power […] in the temptation-scene," he asserts, resides in the fact that "he represents something that is in Othello" (264). Interestingly, Leavis blames Othello for what Bradley blamed Iago, egotism and self-centredness (265), and adds to these a "heroic self-dramatization" and "self-idealization" (270).

In addition to locating the cause of his vulnerability (this was my second question) in Othello himself, Leavis reveals a split in Othello's perception that might help us better understand the Moor's outlook on who Desdemona is: Leavis shows that from the first scene of the fourth act onward Othello subtly distinguishes between what Leavis calls Desdemona's "person" and "the character of the owner" of that "person," between what Othello perceives of her in his "romantic idealizing love" and "reality" (271). His murder of Desdemona Leavis explains then as "a sacrifice" to save the ideal from Desdemona herself (272). For Leavis, not Iago but Othello himself is the *hupokritēs* in the first meaning of the word I expounded on above: the actor or player. Othello's "self-dramatization," Leavis argues, is "un-self-comprehending" (275), that is, Othello deceives not only us, who are inclined "to see the play through [his] eyes" (276), but himself as well. Othello's perception, Leavis claims, suffers from a divorce between "appearance and reality" (278). With this,

[21] Leavis 260.

he has taken us a substantive step closer to resolving our question about the source of Othello's vulnerability. The Moor's promptness in his response to "Iago's diabolic intellect" and his readiness to "doubt his wife" (264) cannot indeed issue from Iago's character alone. Leavis sets up a reciprocal relationship between the effect of "Iago's diabolic intellect" and "Othello's readiness to respond" (264), a zero-sum economy, which suggests that my two initial questions about Iago's power and Othello's vulnerability to it cannot be answered independently of each other.

2.2. Inherent and Analytical Signification

Instead of considering the two characters' perception separately to share the responsibility for the tragedy between them, an examination of how Iago arrives at his point of view and how Othello then attempts to join him in observing Desdemona as a common object of desire over whose "appetite[…]" (3.3.287) he has no control promises to yield a more complete understanding of the source of the ancient's growing power over the general. One of the important texts that "dislodged *Othello* from the old interpretive boxes of character criticism, genre studies and literary appraisal," Orlin says, was Lynda E. Boose's "Othello's Handkerchief: 'The Recognizance and Pledge of Love'" in 1975.[22] In fact, Robert Bechtold Heilman was the first to point out that the handkerchief, "far from being only the trivial object that Rymer saw, has a specific symbolic status" and that it leads us "in to the crowning statement in the play of love."[23] "The handkerchief is a talisman," Heilman argues, and he uses its "quasi-sacramental" power to contrast Iago's "minimizing naturalism" (212) in the play. Othello becomes vulnerable to the influence of "the Iago naturalism," Heilman writes, and, as a result, "rejects the magical powers of love" (212). Boose adopts Heilman's emphasis on the "magic in the web" and, following him,[24] places the handkerchief at the center of

[22] Orlin 2f.
[23] Robert Bechtold Heilman, *Magic in the Web: Action and Language in* Othello (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1956) 211.
[24] Boose 369.

the plot "around which the rest of the tragedy inexorably whirls."[25] She elaborates on the range of multilayered meanings in the symbol in opposition to what she calls, in echoing Heilman's phrase, Iago's "pornographic literalism" (367). Iago rouses Brabantio and shocks audiences in the first scene of the play with images in this mode. I am turning now to Boose's study on how a change in Othello's perception of an object so important to him may transform the meaning of that object. Since, due to its metonymic connection to her, the handkerchief represents Desdemona's power over Othello, Boose's insight into the signifying properties of this object may cast light also on how Othello's perception of Desdemona changes in the course of his interaction with Iago. As Paul Yachnin says, "the play trades the handkerchief for Desdemona's body."[26]

Picking up the handkerchief which Thomas Rymer dropped,[27] so to speak, because he did not understand how it could "raise every where all this clutter and turmoil" "on the Stage,"[28] Boose tugs at a network of rich and complex "ritual significations,"[29] a whole order of poetic semiotics with tension-filled pairs of symbol and referent, to show "what is ultimately destroyed" (367). At its hidden and mainly forgotten levels, the handkerchief connects more or less natural phenomena to each other, and it inspires symbolic and artistic human imitation of their perceptual forms. The "highly visual picture of a square piece of white linen spotted with strawberry-red fruit," for example, Boose says, bears a visual and metaphoric connection to "virgin blood" (362) and to "stained wedding sheets" (363).[30] The fact that the former appears frequently as an emblem among

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[25] Lynda E. Boose. "Othello's Handkerchief: 'The Recognizance and Pledge of Love'." *English Literary Renaissance* 5.3 (Autumn 1975): 360–74. 368.
[26] Paul Yachnin, "Magical Properties: Vision, Possession, and Wonder in *Othello*," *Theatre Journal* 48 (1996): 197–208. 206.
[27] Othello himself depreciates it saying, "Your napkin is too little: / Let it alone" (3.3.304f), and lets it drop.
[28] Rymer 140.
[29] Boose 363.
[30] In his *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theater* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), Louis Adrian Montrose elaborates on similarly flexible associations in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* between the "wedding rite," the "act of defloration," and the "metamorphosis" (172–73) of the flower "love-in-idleness" (*MND* 2.1.168), "Before, milk-white; now, purple with love's wound" (167). Montrose observes, too, a difference between "physical," "symbolic," and "literalized" modes of the conceptualization of marriage. Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's*

"embroidery designs from the period" might be related to the observation that "the treble-leafed strawberry plant bore a red fruit from its initially white flower" and to the association of "love and desire" with flowers of the "generic rose family" to which strawberry also belonged (362). The perceptual similarity between such phenomena establishes less than direct associations between layers of observed natural processes, opens them up for unconscious imitation in rituals based on this similarity, and renders them available for more deliberate symbolic, artistic creation.

The loose connection between these layers, however, can under circumstances tighten, and metaphor may succumb to the force of the simpler figure of allegory, symbol to that of analogy, and both may collapse into a straight and "honest" equation, a putative literal correspondence between symbol and referent. Iago's image representing Desdemona and Othello's love in a picture of copulating animals right in the first scene of the play represents this extreme case in our analytic system of signification when the voyeur unveils the "thing" and presents it to the embarrassment of sign users who unexpectedly glimpse the physical reality of lovemaking conjured up by the literal power of language. This expectation that follows from our training creates the horror and the reaction of refusal in facing a limit of signification in the literal force of words. Partly, but not entirely, under Iago's influence, Othello loses his grasp on the multilayered depth in the meaning of the handkerchief, or rather he escapes its magic power, and for him it turns from a token of love into a piece of evidence with a flat literal meaning. At the end of this process, the handkerchief does not act anymore as a tissue that *connects* through its rich symbolism and through the repetition of the performative gestures it organizes, like ritual observances and its passage from one generation to the next, but it *litigates* by the fact of its mere presence or absence.

The shift of the handkerchief in Othello's perception from the magical order of signification with meaning inherent in its very substance to that of a symbol with a corresponding referent

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Dream, *The Norton Shakespeare*. *Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York, London: W W Norton, 1997) 814–861.

outside it—as it is understood in western semiotics since Augustine of Hippo[31]—might bring us closer to seeing a change in Othello's relationship to Desdemona from the absolute value of a sense of magical sympathy in love to the yes/no alternative of "strumpet" or "not," "whore" or "not a whore" (4.2.84, 89). However, this would account only for Othello's attraction to the binary mechanism in the western way of meaning-making or for his readiness to formulate his view of Desdemona in such terms. Putting our finger on the moment when Othello first responds to Iago's reductionist dyad might be relatively easy, and probably we will find that it is not Othello's invention but that Iago introduces him first to this framework. However, we will still have to explain the origin of Othello's negative bias within the binary. Apparently, the Augustinian signifying order offers a simple approach to what might have seemed to Othello a restricting bond of attachment, which the handkerchief, laden with layers upon layers of powerful symbols, metonymically stands for.[32] Freed from the magic of such ties, he seems to approach Desdemona with a distinct curiosity about the possibility of her guilt his words can conjure up without implicating him in their signifying power:

OTHELLO: […]

Impudent strumpet!

DESDEMONA: By heaven, you do me wrong.

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[31] For simplicity's and clarity's sake, I am using Ogden and Richards' terminology here. As Augustine formulates, a sign is "a thing which of itself makes some other thing come to mind, besides the impression that it presents to the senses." Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, ed. and trans. R. P. H. Green (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) 57. Austin discovered that our order of signification still retains a remnant of the power of the "Egyptian" immediacy of reference and named this aspect "performative" (6).

[32] The difference between the two signifying orders stood at the center of a theological debate from early on in Protestantism. Based on St. Augustine's concept of the duality of word and the "thing" that it points to, John Calvin asserted that the promise in the sacrament does not change even though words that refer to it do. Lutherans, on the other hand, postulated "a more intrinsic, even indissoluble, connection between words and meaning." Richard Waswo, *Language and Meaning in the Renaissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987) 254f. Calvin's "mystical participation of the sign in the thing" which are, however, still separate, Waswo argues, "is the central principle of Augustinian semantics" (255). Martin Luther, in contrast, "refused to divide words from meanings" (256) in the Augustinian way and insisted on a "'literal' and inexplicable union of bread and [Christ's] body" (255) in the Eucharist. Luther's position on signification corresponds to the magical properties of the handkerchief which get lost in the Iagovian order of signification that follows the Augustinian and Calvinian "linguistic dualism" (256).

OTHELLO: Are you not a strumpet? (4.2.83f)

While such words might extricate him from the power of Desdemona's body, Othello seems interested in filling those "stops" and "close dilations"[33] that, as he says, "fright me" and the content of which he assumes issues "from the heart" (3.3.136) of a "brother,"[34] Iago, that "passion cannot rule" (137). It seems as if Othello is compensating himself for the imaginary loss of Desdemona's love with his loyalty to Iago, who offers to liberate him from it. To prove that Desdemona's love indeed restricts Othello's freedom of movement, we should be able to test against the evidence Leavis's claim that Othello has never trusted Desdemona in the first place. If this is the case, we will not have to search further for a reason for Othello's vulnerability.

In what was the most important book in Shakespeare studies in the 1980s,[35] and certainly in early modern scholarship in general, Stephen Greenblatt does not see a liberating promise for Othello in discourse. He does not see two alternative modes of signification at work in the play but only one, and he calls it "*narrative self-fashioning.*"[36] Othello and Iago, however, depend on it in different ways, which accounts for Iago's influence over Othello. We observed the power of narrative in *Arden* in the previous chapter. Iago, Greenblatt claims, in a way similar to how I thought Black Will was doing it, "inscribes […] those around him" into the narrative he "constructs" (234). The ancient is in command due to his "improvisational" skill, while Othello is weighed down by his inflexible and helpless submission to a long tradition of antifeminist writing. Even though this

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[33] Iago's "pauses, single words and pregnant phrases," Patricia Parker begins her analysis of Shakespeare's rhetoric in *Othello* "seem to suggest something secret or withheld, a withholding which fills the Moor with the desire to hear more." "Shakespeare and Rhetoric: 'Dilation' and 'delation' in *Othello*," *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, ed. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey H. Hartman (New York, London: Methuen, 1985) 55–74. 55. Parker points out that "the Ensign Iago's 'dilations' open up a sense of something much larger than can be unfolded or shown" (64), that is, the rich meaning behind the handkerchief. This way of nonverbal signication touches Othello's self, I argue in this chapter, and gives him hope in the fourth scene of the third Act that Desdemona might be able to save him from his own "accusation" (one of the meanings of the word "dilation," 57) of her by producing the handkerchief.

[34] Coppélia Kahn, *Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1981) 144.

[35] Orlin 6.

[36] Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1980) 234.

tradition is not explicitly represented in the play, Greenblatt invokes it on account of the possibility that a deictic element in one of Iago's soliloquies points to a hidden and unexpected referent. The element that sums up "the dark essence of Iago's whole enterprise" for Greenblatt is the "felicitous" "ambiguity of the third-person pronoun" in Iago's words from the end of the first act when he plans "to abuse Othello's ear / That *he* is too familiar with his wife" (233 emphasis added). The emblematic significance of the phrase, Greenblatt argues, hinges on the assumption that the "he" I highlighted above means Othello, not Cassio, to whom, however, he clearly refers in a "his" three lines preceding this (1.3.376) and in naming him the line before that (375). This would certainly require that the pronoun "he" in the following line as well refers, not to Cassio, but to Othello, who should be, accordingly, "suspected, framed to make women false" (381), even though Iago characterized Cassio, not Othello, as "a proper man" for the role of Desdemona's seducer in line 375. If this improbable condition does not hold, then Iago must suddenly switch to a reference to Othello and immediately back to one to Cassio without indicating it in a longer passage that otherwise discusses how appropriate Cassio is as a means to Iago's aim of abusing Othello. The language game Greenblatt attributes to Iago here is indeed narrative, what is more, purely linguistic and narrowly grammatical in its variation of the deixis of a pronoun. If Iago does this here, it is unique in his diction throughout the play text.

Besides the puzzling question whom Iago intends to mislead or secretly inform here with an allegedly ambiguous usage in a soliloquy, there is a bigger problem with this interpretation: it does not fit the overall course of the way language functions in the play. Although, as I hope I will be able to show, Othello becomes gradually more well-versed in the dichotomy in the Augustinian semiotics of "sign" and "thing"[37] and the Protestant belief in the literal power of language,[38] it is

[37] A sign is "a thing which of itself makes some other thing come to mind, besides the impression that it presents to the senses." Augustine. *De Doctrina Christiana*, ed. and trans. R. P. H. Green (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) 57. John Longshaw Austin discovered that our order of signification still retains a remnant of the

apparent that in Act 3, scene 3 he still cannot process the significance of Iago's words in abstraction, without presupposing the workings of "passion" behind them as a source from which they should issue. The example I presented two paragraphs earlier where Othello supplies for himself the context of a passionate "heart" (3.3.136) in Iago, in which he can embed the ancient's words to carry vital significance for him, is a case in point. Without providing an opportunity for such a context to emerge, with the unmotivated switch in the deixis of a pronoun, Iago could hardly "abuse Othello's ear" (1.3.378), as Greenblatt argues, especially as early as the first act.

As far as Iago's typical signifying habit is concerned, it is more characteristic of him to impress his audience, onstage and off, with vivid images based on the listeners' expectation of a complete correspondence of words and reality. A belief that words can cover reality fully enables men to wield power successfully in *Othello*, as, for example, the Duke of Venice and Iago. The Duke sums up this literalist belief when he instructs Brabantio to read "the bloody book of law / […] in the bitter letter / After your own sense" (1.3.69–71). These words so tellingly reveal, at the same time, the arbitrariness of such a "reading." Not even Brabantio, a senator, is able to follow the Duke's prescription to turn "injury" into "a mock'ry" by imposing a "smile" on "a bootless grief" (210–12). For Brabantio, words are of no consequence when it comes to "sorrow," because "words

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power of the "Egyptian" immediacy of reference and named this aspect "performative" in *How to do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962) 6.

[38] To be able to appreciate, and make use of, the power of language to create and control dramatic reality, a character has to be able to free him- or her-self from the assumption that language and words inhere in things they designate. Frank Kermode observes a development in Shakespeare over his career, "in the course of the greatest decade of English drama," toward such a kind of "new rhetoric" that he established, Kermode says, "about the time of *Hamlet* and highly developed by the time of *Coriolanus* and the Romances." He describes this process in terms of a "gradual toughening up of the language, accompanied by a new freedom of metaphor and allusion" and what he calls an even "subtler change[…] from the simpler expressiveness of the early plays to an almost self-indulgent, obsessive passion for particular words, their chimings and interchimings, their repetition." *Shakespeare's Language* (London, New York: Allen Lane/Penguin, 2000) 16f. It seems Iago has the means to compel Othello to go along with such a poetic freedom in language use which entails an acceptance of the dualism of sign and thing. Is this kind of independent use of figurative language lying? This question in writing came to the forefront of debates in the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth centuries, Maria Franziska Fahey asserts, and St. Augustine, she adds, took a stance on the issue saying that "figurative or prophetic speech" can be "truthful" and they are "only misunderstood to be lies." *Metaphor and Shakespearean Drama: Unchaste Signification*, Early Modern Literature in History Ser. (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) 75f.

are words." He cannot imagine how "the bruised heart" could be "pierced," that is, "relieved" "through the ear" (217, 221f, 222n). Brabantio is at an intermediary stage between Desdemona and Iago, if we accept them as representatives of two extremes, where he can already formulate in a clear language his dependence on kinship ties of "blood" (1.1.171) and his fear of the power of witchcraft, of natural substances over the mind (1.1.173, 1.2.74–76), and of the "practices of cunning hell" (1.3.104) — all of which he associates metonymically with the "sooty bosom" (1.2.71) of the Moor —, but where he cannot yet protect himself against these by taking up a sterile narrative position above them. This and a constant play with constructing a language to delve into such fears and to channel them along a coherent narrative will be Iago's invention in the play. Brabantio's example should clearly warn us not to focus narrowly and exclusively on narrativity and textuality in self-fashioning, because these are only a part of a larger game that characters play on a broader scale. This scale in *Othello* includes shades and registers all the way from the inarticulate expression of emotion ("She gave me for my pains a world of sighs," 1.3.161) and the belief in magic (as "in the web" of the handkerchief, 3.4.65) to the sophisticated and powerful use of language to evoke primordial instinct, desire, and fear or at least the impression of these in onlookers (typically in Iago's language, for example, in the image of "the beast with two backs," 1.1.118, and in his "reading" of Bianca's body for iconic signs in 5.1.106–120).

Greenblatt argues that Othello succumbs to "the colonial power of Christian doctrine over sexuality"[39] because, under the pressure to accommodate to a foreign culture, "he cannot allow himself the moderately flexible adherence that most ordinary men have toward their own formal beliefs" (245). Since he "at once represents the institution and the alien, the conqueror and the infidel" (234), "Christianity is the alienating yet constitutive force in Othello's identity" (245). Othello is thus vulnerable to, and submits to, Iago's "ceaseless narrative invention" (235) due to his own vague recognition of "his status as a text" (238). Iago, by contrast, "knows that an identity that

[39] Greenblatt 242.

has been fashioned as a story can be unfashioned, refashioned, inscribed anew in a different narrative" (238). Enabled by this knowledge, he inscribes Othello, together with "those around him" (234) who "have always already experienced submission" to such fictions (237), in the story he constructs (234). This would explain, in Greenblatt's framework of "*submission to narrative self-fashioning*" (234), that Othello, who has constituted himself as text already, must compulsively restore his identity in these terms after his wife has subverted it, however "unintentionally," through her own "erotic submission" to him (244). Instead of an Othello who enters the play as his own narrative construct and defends his textual identity against Desdemona's erotic assault, I would like to argue for one whose identity is grounded at least as firmly in his lived experience, in his sensuality, and in his belief in the magic of union in desire as in his denial of all this as well as, finally, in his regret for having betrayed it. As a consequence, Othello's self-fashioning might appear narrative in its aspirations; but it is, in fact, narrative *and*, at the same time, emotional, bodily, sexual, magical, and inwardly felt.

Nonetheless, in Greenblatt's interpretation, once he subjects his already textual identity entirely to an "institutional hostility to desire" (248), desire which is "a kind of idolatry" (249) in written Christian doctrine, the Moor betrays a "deep current of sexual anxiety" that Desdemona's "frank acceptance of pleasure and [her] submission to her spouse's pleasure […] awakens" (250) in him. A strong presupposition underlies this argument: it attributes to Othello an orthodox dogmatism without showing how he, as a newcomer to Christianity, has been exposed to the effect of the long tradition of such writings that Greenblatt traces from Saint Jerome through English Protestantism to early seventeenth-century Puritanism. Furthermore, when the argument presents Othello's identity as "always already" textual, it ignores the heartfelt sensuality of his language, for example, in his "round unvarnished tale" (1.3.92) of "the story of my life" (131) in the third scene of the first act, as opposed to the pornographic literalness in Iago's language in the first scene of the play and elsewhere. As a result of presenting Othello and Iago as if they were subject to the same

kind of "narrative self-fashioning," Greenblatt's interpretation cannot account for why they cannot use its technique with a similar level of command and thus for the foundation of Iago's advantage and his controlling position over Othello. Othello retells his own story at several different occasions with shifting emphases: this indicates that he, too, as a servant of the state, knows how to refashion identity, like Iago does. As a convert employed by the Christian state of Venice, he probably has to. In the text of the play, there are no signs of a dogmatic aspect of Othello's denial of his own sexuality; instead, it seems to originate, like his decision to take advantage of Desdemona, of Iago, and of Cassio, even before the action of the play begins, from his anxious desire to secure his position in the political elite of Venice. Othello's vulnerability is more power-related than strictly religious.

2.3. Power and Vulnerability in the Feminist, Cultural Materialist, and Postcolonialist criticism of *Othello*

The articles I have selected for review in these schools of criticism reach out beyond a pure textuality in their explanations of the Othello–Iago power dynamics, and thus they open the field for a more satisfying account of the interplay between the power of discourse and of forces outside it. In a "particularly influential" work of "first-wave"[40] feminist criticism, Coppélia Kahn continued on the path F. R. Leavis had broken. According to Kahn, Iago needs only to help Othello to an anamnesis[41] to awaken "the sleeping monster" that is already there in his mind,[42] in a way similar to what Leavis called "the essential traitor […] within the gates."[43] She also calls attention to the "rapidity" in Othello's reaction to Iago's gesture of "reminding" (143), but she explains Othello's

[40] Orlin 4.
[41] Jacques Derrida uses the word "anamnesia" in the sense of "live memory," as the "proper[…] psychic motion" of "true science" in opposition to "hypomnesia," that is, remembering with the help of an external reminder, writing. *Dissemination*, transl. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981) 107.
[42] Kahn 143.
[43] Leavis 264.

vulnerability to the power of this "monster" (143) by arguing only that he has a share in what appears to be a static collective unconscious of his host culture, a "fantasy […] commonly held in [Iago's] society" which confirms the "fears [Othello] already has about women" (140). This fear is the basis of the bond between Othello and Iago as his "brother" (140), Kahn argues, but how it finds its way into Othello's mind she does not say. Our reading of Leavis raised the question of the origin of Othello's negative bias against Desdemona, and Kahn seems to suggest, in accordance with Leavis, that Othello has never trusted Desdemona in the first place. Kahn collapses my two questions into one statement, arguing that "Iago's revenge depends on his gaining the Moor's absolute trust" (143). Has Shakespeare not left a hint in the text to indicate what makes Othello go beyond merely allowing Iago to "take" Desdemona's place in his "heart" (143)? A shared fear of women might explain why Othello enters into a "union […] of two male minds" (144), but not what makes him allow Iago to overwrite his own lived experience in a fiction and why he defeats his own resistance in a painful struggle to finally accept that fiction and act upon it as if he believed it was true.

Alan Sinfield, in the "most significant cultural-materialist intervention in *Othello* studies,"[44] posits the omnipotence of texts and attempts to transcend it at once. Sinfield's "Cultural Materialism, *Othello* and the Politics of Plausibility"[45] answers my first question about the power of Iago's "honesty" claiming that the ancient is "convincing […] because his is the voice of 'common sense', the ceaseless repetition of the always-already 'known', the culturally 'given'" (52). "The state is the most powerful scriptor" of ideology (54), Sinfield argues, suggesting that Iago, the powerful man in *Othello*, embodies the state and its "common sense" in the "effective stories" (53) he wields as his weapons. While individual identity can normally develop solely on a given ideological and

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[44] Orlin 9.

[45] Alan Sinfield, "Cultural Materialism, *Othello* and the Politics of Plausibility," Othello*: Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. Lena Cowen Orlin, New Casebooks Ser. (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) 49–77.

textual basis, Sinfield sees a possibility for subversive action in an emerging feminist subculture (58). Thus, he implicitly assigns Othello to one camp with Iago, on the side of the dominant discourse of the state. Ultimately, however, power struggle takes place exclusively on the level of texts, Sinfield argues (68). Textuality has its own mechanisms, he claims, and there is no safe position outside it from which the "reading" of texts could be controlled (69). Sinfield still attempts to move beyond the realm of texts to a vaguely defined "conceptual framework" that might emerge as the ultimate source of available meanings (71). Since Sinfield's understanding of textuality does not attribute to Othello an independent agency outside it, we cannot explain in this framework why stories are more effective in Iago's hands than in Othello's, unless we assume that Iago has control over those extra-textual "concepts." But Sinfield does not elaborate on this question further.

A representative postcolonial study by Emily C. Bartels shows a possible way out of our "entrapment" (Sinfield 59) in discourse and will help us open a broader context for the understanding of the power relationship between Othello and Iago. Bartels invokes the critical opinion that "Othello's claim to identity" is founded merely in an established set of texts and, therefore, it is "tenuous and derivative."[46] Othello limits his testimony in the trial scene, Bartels allows, to summing up Brabantio's and Desdemona's perception of who he is (158), and thus he seems to be dissolving willingly in "an exoticizing European discourse" (159), feeding "Europe its own fantasies" of the colonized subject. Paradoxically, however, exactly as a result of this submissive self-presentation, Othello emerges as a flexible subject forming his own identity. Bartels uses as proof the way Othello resorts to the handkerchief in a "crisis" and "puts 'magic' in its web" retrospectively, so to speak, to "manipulate" Desdemona. Bartels questions whether "the enchanted past Othello produces is, to his mind, finally his" (161), but she observes that in the performance history Shakespeare's Moor has resisted being "typecast" (163). Therefore, Othello remains a

[46] Emily C. Bartels, "Othello on Trial," *Othello: Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. Lena Cowen Orlin, New Casebooks Ser. (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) 148–170. 151.

controversial figure whose "search for interiority" allows him to "stand apart as well as within" the forms of "fixed European fantasies" (165). With this, Bartels accepts the force of inwardness as a possible factor, in opposition to the linearity of texts and narratives, in the shaping of Othello's identity. Her work opens the field for a study of how these two poles affect the power relations between him and Iago, which may help us understand the reasons for Othello's submission to the ancient's narrative.

3. Iago's "Honesty"

3.1. Iago and the Power of Discourse

While he admits he cannot give a complete explanation of Othello's vulnerability,[47] Edward Pechter brings together much of the material we need to mount a case for the origin of Iago's extraordinary power: the way Pechter describes Othello's aggressive expansionist technique it appears to be the opposite of Arden's defensive attitude. As I tried to show in the previous chapter, Arden avoids identification with both the substance of local passions as the source of religious and political subversion in Faversham and the written assignment of his function he receives from the distant royal court to control those passions. Iago, however, exploits the power of both poles in a dichotomy which is implicitly there in the way the Augustinian semiotic system makes sense of the world. One is the stuff that builds the putative core of the self, makes it unique, and lends sexuality a sense of singularity in personal sympathy — all of which we might sum up in the term of inwardness; the other results from a tendency in all of this to lose its unmistakable personal hue and dissolve in a discourse that handles and organizes these essential, positive qualities in social interaction and in the interest of the larger social and political unit of the nation and the state. The power of discourse to organize social interaction derives in a general sense from the notion that

[47] Pechter 105, 109.

Jimmy Durante formulated saying, "Everybody wants to get into the act."[48] More specifically, we experience in *Othello* that Iago scripts the "act" in what is the only powerful narrative in the play. We can observe a similar dichotomy appearing in the tension-filled relationship between the "thing" itself and the "sign" that names it and arranges it in distinct categories in a system of other signs in language.

Pechter finds the readiness of discourse and textuality to appropriate the sense of inwardness so pervasive that he thinks a process similar to the dissolution of Othello's character in the stream of Iago's dehumanizing generalizations is taking place in the criticism of the play itself as it accepts more and more the centrality of the ancient's function in the plot. "The ascendancy of Iago," Pechter says, "is a major triumph of modern *Othello* criticism" (28); and later he adds, "critical interpretation of *Othello* has increasingly absorbed itself into Iago's unillusioned and self-assured generalizations, to the point where current commentary on the play seems designed as an instrument for Iago's voice" (161). This is, he suggests, our way of escaping from the painful experience of the tragedy itself (29): this is why we follow Iago's lead in transforming "the materials of pain into an achieved insensibility" (161). Moreover, Pechter sees the apparent power of texts to intrude upon inwardness in the larger context of "the relationship between structure and subject in human history and society" as he finds it in Perry Anderson's formulation.[49]

Pechter frames the problem indicated in the first of my two questions, asking how "we explain" Iago's "extraordinary domination," his "power to shape belief" (50, 54), and "why […] we believe him?" (136). He characterizes the nihilism in Iago's "anxiety-driven and anxiety-producing perspective" as something that eradicates the unique significance of specific locales and collapses the distinction between self and other "into a monstrous undifferentiation" (38). Othello and

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[48] Kenneth Burke, "*Othello*: An Essay to Illustrate a Method," *The Hudson Review* 4.2 (1951): 165–203. 188, also qtd. in Pechter 190.
[49] Perry Anderson, *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) 33, qtd. in Pechter 106.

Desdemona's lovemaking Iago represents as "bestial passion" (43), Pechter claims, and a similar view of it haunts Brabantio in his "subconscious fear of an apparently recurring nightmare" (51). This in itself indicates a curious connection between the idea of Iago's "mere" textuality so often dominating critical views of the play since the 1980s and the power of extra-linguistic forces Brabantio himself hopes have already been textualized and thus contained: "Is there not charms / By which the property of youth and maidenhood / May be abused?," he asks Roderigo anxiously once he has been roused from his sleep and found out that Desdemona had indeed left his house. "Have you not read, Roderigo, / Of some such thing?" (1.1.173–76). Roderigo answers in the affirmative, which suggests that textuality can make non-verbal fears indeed manifest and "palpable to thinking" (1.2.77).

Pechter calls attention not only to what Iago says but also to the pauses (54) he makes to invite Othello not merely to fill in missing words and ideas but also, and most importantly, to allow him to actively provide his own self as the substance to complete the structure of Iago's abstract scenario as a principle of organization and to urge Othello to shape his own perception in it from Iago's point of view. Not only Coleridge and Romanticism followed Othello's example in adapting to Iago's character by fleshing it out to dispel its "mystery" (55), Pechter argues, but Iago's technique makes us as well "joint venturers with him" (56). Instead of attributing a positive value to a unique place or showing genuine sympathy toward another self, Iago's perspective organizes such entities in terms of their position in relation to a dominant, dispassionate point of view. Thus, Pechter asks with Greenblatt if the "ego underlie[s] … all institutional structures," or is it "constituted by institutional structures" (63). In this respect, Iago's perspective coincides with that of the state which he claims to "know" (1.1.149) already in the first scene of the play. This allows him, for example, to give a fair estimate of Othello's fate in the trial that will take place two scenes later: "the state," he predicts, "Cannot with safety cast him, for he's embarked / With such loud reason to the Cyprus wars," in which "Another of his fathom they have none / To lead their business" (151f,

154f). Iago's insider information and his identification with the reason of state are already in the first scene astounding. By speaking "with the authority of the canny insider" (Pechter 135), he "manages to stay one step ahead of us" (73), and he does so by having Othello fill the gaps in his authoritative narrative by willingly transforming the stuff of his own self into its textual terms. But what makes Othello so eager to accept Iago's false explanation of his own experience? What makes Othello shun his own felt reality and exchange it for the one Iago constructs?

Not essence but relation holds Iago's attention. For Pechter, Iago is not interested in the meaning but rather in the "enabling condition " of human identity which, he asserts, lies in "differentiation" (64). Iago realizes identity "in difference" (64), and he imparts to us his understanding that we know "real facts" only through "differentiation" (65). Comparisons are "the basis of identity" (66), Pechter writes. Iago, he claims, "is pure negativity, difference without positive terms" (67). This conceptualization of identity parallels Ferdinand de Saussure's view of language. "The value of just any term," he argues, "is […] determined," synchronically, "by its environment,"[50] and not by its content, the idea it stands for. Every linguistic term cuts out a concept from "the floating realm of thought" (112), but concepts, again, like words, "are purely differential and defined not by their positive content but negatively by their relations with the other terms of the system" (117). Thus, I propose, when Iago uses the power of language to create a vivid image of reality, he derives that force not merely from the meaning we associate with his words but, at least in part, from the function those words fulfill among other words in the system of language that strives for an existence independent of the reality it designates or creates. This might account for the independent, system-building potential in his narrative which, if it is coherent in itself, can create the impression of a self-contained system in Othello's perception.

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[50] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, transl. Wade Baskin, ed. Charles Bally et al. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959) 116.

Othello taps into this creative effect of language, as we see it in his narrative of life as early as the trial scene. Desdemona here interrupts the flow of imperial discourse, where everything is relations,[51] with the uncontextualized positive fact of her bodily desire. Othello, however, defines who he is in contrast to Desdemona's heartfelt identification with, and subjection to, him. When she "trumpet[s] to the world" that her "heart's subdued / Even to the very quality of my lord" (1.3.252f), Othello dissociates himself from her love by calling his eyes "speculative and officed instruments," withdrawing them from the "light-winged toys / Of feathered Cupid" and offering them, instead, to the "serious and great business" (272, 270f, 269) of the state. Once Othello enters the inner circle of the state with her help, not even Desdemona seems to belong to him personally anymore.[52] Pechter admits he cannot quite pinpoint the reason why Othello dissociates himself from Desdemona. He concludes, however, that the "aspects of identity and self-understanding" that Iago works with are "essential to the way we experience ourselves in the world" (63). In the light of the system-building tendency of language, we only need to identify the cause that might make a guilty Desdemona an attractive prospect for Othello to understand why he gets carried away by a fiction about Desdemona's unfaithfulness that he himself expands then under Iago's tutelage.

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[51] The headquarters teem with "composition" (1.3.1) and "credit" (2), "news […] disproportioned" (1, 3) and "just account" (6), "difference" and "confirm[ation]" (8), and all this adds up to some "judgment" (10) that makes islands in the Mediterranean with their history and population appear as mere signifiers and that accounts for "galleys" (4) of the Turkish fleet that carry human cargo in terms of sheer numbers.

[52] The appropriation of inherent values seems to result from the nature of power in an imperial state. The Roman Empire, too, was transparent only from a single but in itself obscure point of view: the point of view of the *princeps*. "It was understood that to him, as omnipotent ruler, all marvels should be conveyed or reported." Richard J. A. Talbert, "Emperor," *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. Michael Gagarin, Vol. 3 (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2010) 55. In his *Myths of Venice: The Figuration of a State* (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), David Rosand points out that "Venice claimed to be […] a true historical successor to pagan Rome" (6). As a result, it seems inevitable that empire figures in Shakespeare as the site of the fatal dissolution of the personal attachment between Desdemona and Othello. In connection with the unity as an ideal in medieval society (which finds its perfect visual expression in the representation of space in the Renaissance invention of linear perspective, as I will argue in section 3.3.), Walter Ullmann argues that "the medieval thesis of the corporational structure of society" as an "indivisible" "whole" was "rooted […] in Roman conceptions." *The Individual and Society in the Middle Ages* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966) 36.

3.2. Literalness and Depth in Signification: Iago's Position and the Body

If an important aspect of Iago's persona is a "disgust for the flesh" (77), as Pechter argues, we might wonder why Iago "sets the play in motion" (97) with appalling images of Desdemona and Othello's love-making and insists that Othello "Strangle her in her bed, even the bed she hath contaminated" (4.1.193f), thus driving the action "relentlessly to an inevitably 'incorporate conclusion'" (97, Pechter quotes *Othello* 2.1.248). While Iago weaves a powerfully coherent narrative to organize the plot that often seems far-fetched and widely detached from what other characters and we perceive onstage,[53] his signifiers, in the Saussurean sense, are precise in evoking irresistible images of sexualized bodies and body parts in action through what Saussure calls their "arbitrary"[54] association with the signified. We cannot resist "seeing," as it were, the very details in Iago's rendering, for example, of what the stage direction terms Desdemona and Cassio's intimate conversation (2.1.164): "He takes her by the palm. Ay, well said, whisper," Iago reports and commands at the same time. "Ay, smile upon her, do […]. Very good; well kissed! An excellent courtesy! 'Tis so, indeed. Yet again your fingers to your lips?" (165–67, 170f). The mental link between "signifiant" and "signifié" is the psychologically internalized version of the connection between Augustine's "sign" and "thing" or of that between what Ogden and Richards call "symbol" and "referent."[55] The power of Iago's words relies on our expectation that they are literally true and that they report bodily motion from moment to moment as they are happening, accurately. We expect them to be true because, even though it appears arbitrary synchronically, the connection

[53] To the information about Desdemona being "directly in love with" Cassio, Roderigo responds with an incredulous "With him? Why, 'tis not possible" (2.1.215f).
[54] Saussure 67.
[55] Charles Kay Ogden and Ivor Armstrong Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning: A Study of the Influence of Language upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1923/1952) 9–12.

between signifier and signified is, diachronically, natural and organic[56] like those layers we observed in the rich symbolism of the handkerchief.

When he reflects on details of bodily acts, Iago's language is so powerful that description and imaginary creation in it become indistinguishable. Pechter points out the way Iago implicates Bianca in the cause of Cassio's injury. Here, we observe the characteristic way Iago's references create a sense of his identity: up to the moment in the last scene when he refuses to speak,[57] he is an inexhaustible source of narratives, but the selves he describes and thus creates are corporeal. In other words, while he appears to other characters as pure discourse, he represents them as material bodies. He alleges that Cassio is "almost slain" is "the fruits of whoring," and he fashions himself as an interpreter of iconic bodily signs. "Look you pale, mistress?" (5.1.116, 118, 107), he turns to Bianca after Roderigo's body and Cassio have been carried off. He uses her physical appearance for the purpose of a "cultural inscription," as Pechter formulates (139):[58] "Do you perceive the gastness of her eye? […] Behold her well; I pray you, look upon her. / Do you see, gentlemen?" After he suggests that Cassio's company at supper might be suspect, he turns to Bianca and pointedly asks her, "What, do you shake at that?" (5.1.116, 118, 120). Upon this, Bianca feels compelled to make a partial confession and to defend herself: "He supped at my house, but I therefore shake not" (121). Such is the power of Iago's language game that it creates a vivid image of a whore who might be complicit in her client's attempted murder. Iago can project "men's guilt onto the women who arouse sexual interest," thus substituting "desire for desirability" (135) as the cause of illicit bodily acts.

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[56] Robin Allott dedicates his book on *The Natural Origin of Language: The Structural Inter-relation of Language, Visual Perception and Action* to the support of the claim that "words, the fabric of language, are not arbitrary, […] but derive from, evolutionarily and psychologically, and are integrated with, perception and action, the other main components of total human behavior" (Knebworth, Hertfordshire: Able, 2001) i.
[57] "Demand me nothing. What you know, you know. / From this time forth I never will speak word" (5.2.311f).
[58] Thomas Mann's Chipolla in *Mario and the Magician* will parallel "Iago's contaminating villainy" (Pechter 137) in a language that creates while purports to describe.

Moreover, Iago suggests that for other characters a bodily, often even beastly, existence is the only acceptable reality. For them to appear otherwise, he suggests, is dishonest. He characterizes Cassio, whom Othello promoted instead of him, as "Mere prattle, without practice" (1.1.27); he slanders Roderigo to win Othello's confidence saying "he prated, / And spoke […] scurvy and provoking terms / Against your honor" (1.2.6–8); he disparages Othello's manhood by telling Roderigo about the "violence" with which Desdemona "first loved the Moor, / but for bragging and telling her fantastical lies," and then asks him disdainfully if she will "love him still for prating?" (2.1.218f). This last example shows how Iago transforms our impression of Othello's speech, a set piece, on which the Duke commented saying, "this tale would win my daughter too" (1.3.173). Iago enhances the ascendancy of his own discourse by discrediting that of others.

To a large extent, Iago's dominance over other characters is due to his identification with the Augustinian "sign" in contradistinction to the "thing," while his special attractiveness to Othello consists in allowing him to transmute his corporeal self, connected in sympathy to that of Desdemona, into a discursive persona similar to his. The ancient's discursive existence is not a matter of choice on his part. What Greenblatt calls "improvisation," he says, "depends first upon the ability and willingness to play a role, to transform oneself […] into another. This necessitates," he goes further, "the acceptance of disguise, the ability to effect a divorce […] between the tongue and the heart. Such role-playing in turn depends," he concludes, "upon the transformation of another's reality into manipulable fiction."[59] But behind this all, the above analysis of the seeming literalism and its creative function suggests, lies in fact a compulsive subordination of perception to the tyranny of language. Othello cannot eliminate the ambiguity in the use of Iago's language and find out if it is descriptive or creative, because he is not allowed to go behind the ancient's words and approach them through what he can see first. Language and perception in Iago are fixed in a strict hierarchical order: words dominate vision.

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[59] Greenblatt 228.

Therefore, to fully accept the literalness in Iago's practice of discursive signification and its creative function, Othello has to learn how to rein in and bring under control the power of his vision. While he initially valiantly asserts his right to an independent point of view and demands first-hand "ocular" (3.3.377) evidence, a "living reason" to verify "she's disloyal" (426), in the course of the plot Othello reluctantly but masochistically acquires from Iago an impairment of vision to eliminate the necessity of eye-witness evidence and to comply with Iago's discursive approach to prosecution. In contrast to the continent, rules that governed what evidence was "necessary for conviction" in Tudor England, Katharine Eisaman Maus writes, "remained loose, almost chaotic." In such circumstances, the "power to convince the jury was all that mattered."[60] As Iago explains, it "were a tedious difficulty […] / To bring" Desdemona to a "prospect" (3.3.414f) where the general, as "supervisor," could "grossly gape on" and "Behold her topped" (412f). "It is impossible you should see this" (419), he declares and adds meaningfully that Desdemona and Cassio themselves would be damned "If ever mortal eyes do see them bolster / More than their own" (415–17), possibly suggesting that this would be something impossible even for them to see. The images Iago conjures through the literal power of his words cannot possibly relate to experiential reality and signify it; they are the product of differences in the system of Iago's language and are determined, as the "value of just any term" is, according to Saussure, by the value of the other terms in his discourse, and not by what they purport to represent. Consequently, Iago does not impose his narrative of Desdemona and Cassio's betrayal on Othello because he chooses to, but because he cannot do otherwise.

So, how does the idea that he must ruin his general's burgeoning political career with a narrative of sexual intrigue enter into Iago's mind? The ancient himself often refers, deceptively, to his own restrictions in the choice of how he should behave. "I lack iniquity / Sometimes to do me

[60] Katharine Eisaman Maus, *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995) 104.

service" (1.2.3f), he excuses himself hypocritically to Othello for not being able to murder the "prating" Roderigo and defend the general against his "scurvy and provoking terms" (1.2.7). Instead of revenging himself on Othello in some bodily action, Iago must encourage Roderigo to do so for him: "If thou canst cuckold him, thou dost thyself a pleasure, me a sport." Moreover, he situates this possibility in the context of some larger force beyond his control and a process that unfolds by itself when he says he foresees "many events in the womb of time which will be delivered" (1.3.353–55). He helplessly admits his compulsion to Desdemona to be "nothing if not critical" (2.1.121), and his toil in complying with a request to "write" (2.1.119) in praise about her: "my invention / Comes from my pate as birdlime does from frieze — / It pucks out brains and all" (127–29). These examples suggest that producing texts is Iago's only skill, and it imposes itself on him irresistibly and obsessively. He formulates even his statement about his initial transformation, "I am not what I am" (1.1.67) in state verbs, not action verbs. It is not the result of a choice but that of his situation as "beleed and calmed" (31) in a helpless situation in a power relationship that has come about in a process intricately interwoven with sexual desire—so, Iago is obsessively unravelling it by undoing that desire for his own political purposes.

As I indicated above, perception is subordinate to language in Iago. To support this claim I would like to show that these two aspects of a character's being in his or her dramatic world[61] can relate to each other in a hierarchical order, because they show structural similarities: the literalness of language in reference corresponds to a lack of depth in the field of one's vision. The implosion of the delicate structure of the kind of the multilayered network of signification Boose showed us at work in the handkerchief has its equivalent in Renaissance painting as the outer limit of the representation of depth. In the wake of the invention of linear perspective to represent three-

[61] As I quoted above in a footnote, Allott names language, perception, and action as the three "main components of total human behavior" (i).

dimensional space on the canvas by Philippo Brunelleschi in Florence in 1425,[62] many painters constructed such pictures with the vanishing point falling into the square of an open door or window at the far back of the interior space they depicted.[63] This corroborates the idea that the vanishing point, although literally visible, falls in an empty space, outside of the eye's capacity to perceive, exactly because the closer an object is to it the less distinct its depth (i.e., its distance from the beholder) appears to be from the depth of another object even if the actual distance between them is sizeable. Consequently, close to the vanishing point, depth seems to be compressed until, at the perspectival center of a picture, there is no depth at all. Therefore, when the painter places the vanishing point on the surface of the canvas, the eye can sense its literal presence; but we cannot perceive it meaningfully in our stereoscopic vision, because outside of the three-dimensional space the painter represents there is no depth in the visual field anymore.

Thus, the vanishing point is a blind spot for the interpretive eye. And still, this spot, like a magnet, attracts the eye and threatens it with robbing it of its capacity to perceive differences in depth. Correspondingly, the sense of a phenomenon of rich complexity like the love between Othello and Desdemona, as Iago attempts to represent it in his image of the "old black ram […] tupping [a] white ewe" (1.1.90f), tests the limits of our capacity in interpretation and it might strike us, simply for this reason, as horrifying. From Othello's perspective, the direct sensation of love between Cassio and Desdemona, in its physical form, literally, is not possible. The extreme case of the overlap of discourse and of bodily reality in a perfect literalness is Iago's horrible invention. His use of literalness is like presenting the vanishing point, a meta-sign that makes pictorial signification possible in the first place, as if it was just like any other spot on the canvas.[64] As we

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[62] Samuel Y. Edgerton, The Mirror, the Window, and the Telescope: How Renaissance Linear Perspective Changed our Vision of the Universe, Cornell Paperbacks Ser. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009) 90.
[63] The most famous example, perhaps, is *Las Meninas* by Diego Velásquez (1656. Oil on canvas. Museo del Prado, Madrid).
[64] Brian Rotman draws these parallels between treating zero, a meta-sign allowing other numbers to mean something, as if it was "just another number among the infinity of numbers," making the vanishing point appear indistinguishable from all the many other depicted locations within a painting," and the phenomenon

saw it in examples above, the way Iago relates words to visible bodily acts is similarly ambiguous: it stimulates the imagination creatively while it purports merely to describe the "thing."

The ambiguity of Iago's literalness in the relation between words and the body is also his weakness. He is not only embarrassed by the potential appearance of reality as layers of depth and not a flat, literal surface, but he also worries about the challenge and the strain the demand of keeping up with the diversity of real phenomena might exert on his eyes. Still, he plays with the idea. Right before he renders Othello and Desdemona's love in flat literalness, he reminds Brabantio of the demand of propriety saying, "For shame, put on your gown!" (1.1.88). While he is careful to conceal aristocratic white male flesh, he represents women, all of them as a type, in terms of a set of disparate but related images—some of them only visual, some also auditory, and some even tactile. The typical woman is irritatingly complex in all of Iago's images and elusive in her artful play on the difference between self and persona, essence and appearance, meaning and its indirect, equivocal representation. According to Iago's elaborate picture, it is difficult to reduce women to a singular, unified image, since in every context they assume a different persona that is always in contrast to an unknowable self that defies containment. Iago still attempts to sum up this uncontrollable diversity in a typifying list of commonplaces[65] in his banter with Desdemona saying,

> You are pictures out of doors,
> Bells in your parlors, wildcats in your kitchens,
> Saints in your injuries, devils being offended,
> Players in your huswifery, and huswives in your beds. (2.1.111–14)

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of "figures of speech dying and becoming literal." *Signifying Nothing: The Semiotics of Zero* (Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: Macmillan, 1987) 3f.

[65] *The Araignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward, and Vnconstant Women* attempts the same. In his effort to suit the world to the word, the author Joseph Swetnam declares that "all women are alike." At the same time, toward the end of his pamphlet, he admits that as "in all things there is a contrary, which sheweth the difference betwixt the good and the bad, even so both of men and women there are contrary sortes of behavior." (London, 1615) 9, 50. *Early English Books Online*. 19 Jan. 2014.

The woman in the last image is naked, sexualized, but curiously alone in her shameful act. In accordance with the rest of the generalizing images in the series, this one focuses also on a woman only. In its flatness, it reminds us of the way Iago invoked Desdemona and Othello in love as a sight similar to that of mating animals. Iago seems fascinated by the mutability of a woman's appearance in changing circumstances and by the tantalizing difference in depth between her appearance and her putative essence, but he also appears anxious to reduce these to a simple formula. With a character of integrity, however, with a live and deliberate connection, consistent but flexible, between self and persona, Iago cannot enter into a meaningful exchange. He dismisses a woman of integrity, the exception to the "dissembling"[66] majority, one who "being angered," for example, "Bade her wrong stay" (2.1.151f), in an anticlimax as bland and unworthy of a more respectable task than "To suckle fools and chronicle small beer" (2.1.159). This type of woman apparently does not hold his attention.

3.3. The Perspective of Empire

Sinfield located the power of the state in its dominant ideological discourse. As we saw above, Iago claims to "know the state" (1.1.149) and even predicts its action accurately based on his familiarity with its interests and on his up-to-date information on the current political situation. Moreover, he uses discourse to deprive the ordinary female subject of her interiority, to lay bare her body in a visual image, and, at the same time, to make sure the statesman Brabantio's body is properly covered from view. A similar urge to build a sense of male integrity on the assumption of women's lack thereof, or rather on forcefully divesting them of it, is apparent in Joseph Swetnam's *The Araignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward, and Vnconstant Women* from 1615. To make the difference

[66] For Swetnam, "for the most part," women prove to be "dissembling in their deeds" (4), "blubbering forth abundance of dissembling tears" (8), etc.

between the sexes clear, the pamphlet denies women a right to independent existence: "Men […] may liue without women," Swetnam asserts, "but women cannot liue without men" (14).

In Swetnam's view, inwardness is a forbidden fruit for women and a privilege of men.[67] He brands women who have some tension between an inner self and an outward persona as erratically and maliciously unreasonable and deliberately wicked. Swetnam's framework for women recognizes two categories only: one is the devilish[68] woman who cunningly undermines a man's position in the world, and the other is the angelic helper[69] and protector that uncritically submits herself to his interest. The former dissembles and acts as a trap, while the latter is transparent and will-less. Swetnam has the same two main objections to the character of women as Iago does: as reflected in the experience of men they are, on the one hand, extremely adaptable to changing circumstances and, therefore, lack a stable identity; on the other hand, they hide an unknowable self behind their various personae like behind masks. Both contribute to an indeterminacy in women's position in society, which frustrates men's effort to weave a strong network of solidarity among themselves and secure their own material and spiritual position in it.

The fact that women are difficult to know is not merely an epistemological problem but a security risk.[70] The diversity and functional ambiguity as perceptual and hermeneutic problems do not only harm individual men, but they hazard the usefulness and reliability of women in the execution of household tasks and in production, and thus they might weaken the competitiveness of a nation's economy and defense. Swetnam names the interest of the nation, of the state itself, as the greatest good he is dedicated to protect from the destabilizing influence of wayward women. "For we are not borne for our selues to liue at pleasure," he declares, "but to take paines, and to labour

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[67] In her *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance*, Katharine Eisaman Maus observes that Othello, in agreement with Iago, comes to interpret Desdemona's "inwardness as guilty secrecy" (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995) 121f.

[68] "[W]omen sprung from the Deuill," Swetnam asserts (15).

[69] "At the first beginning" Moses said according to Swetnam "a woman was made to be a helper vnto man" (1).

[70] Eisaman Maus examines "the epistemological anxieties" "the difference between an unexpressed interior and a theatricalized exterior […] generates" (2) and claims that "[s]ocial life demands the constant practice of induction […]: reasoning from the superficial to the deep […], from seeming to being" (5).

for the good of our Countrey" (26). He encourages men to control women and gives examples to show that women are unable to control themselves (21).

One of the worrisome aspects of a woman's wickedness according to Swetnam is that it can go unnoticed. "[I]n all ill vices she would goe namelesse," he complains and adds that "shee thinks to doe all her knauery inuisible" (25). Therefore, it is essential to strip away the "figge leafe" she uses "to couer her name" and "shew their nakednesse to the world," to "take away their painted cloathes, […] their ruffes, […] their coyfes and stomachers," without which they "looke wildly," "like ragged wals," and "are simple to behold" (25). Because of the misleading surface of their appearance, to be protected against deception in women, Swetnam advises, "thou must not trust thy owne eyes" (45) and be guided by looks alone (45f). This admonition reminds us of Iago's picture laying bare the woman's nakedness to shame her of her body, on the one hand, and give a political significance to Othello's promise not to let Desdemona's nearness "seel" his eyes "with wanton dullness" (1.3.271), on the other.

In contrast to views vehemently advocating a subjection of women to men, Constance Jordan examines humanist arguments that are often more liberal with respect to the admittance of women to public affairs. Sir Thomas Elyot's *Defence of Good Women*, for example, contends that as far as they possess masculine characteristics, women are capable of participating fully in "civic life."[71] Elyot's dialogue confronts orthodox views, derived mainly from Aristotle (249), that confine women to the family and use their subordinate role there for a modeling of their status in the state (251) with the humanist argument that exceptional women who exhibit manly virtues like courage and intelligence can take an active part in "civile policie" (252). In his *Instruction of a Christen woman*, however, Juan Luis Vives explicitly connects the study of oratory to political practice and refuses to allow women to "medle" with either (253). The argument for the reduction of female

[71] Constance Jordan, "Feminism and the Humanists: The Case of Sir Thomas Elyot's *Defence of Good Women*," *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Margaret W. Ferguson et al. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986) 242–58. 247.

interiority, for the control of female sexual energies, and for the silencing of women in public affairs was, therefore, not the only current in early modern Europe. To participate in politics, however, women had to relinquish at least one of the characteristics traditionally required of them, namely silence (243); and if they did so, their other cardinal virtue, chastity, was immediately doubted. Therefore, female behavior that questioned "the accepted view of women as subordinate to men" and opposed to it the alternative of "a woman who is the virtuous equal of the man" always conjured "an image of the culturally alien" (256). Accordingly, when Desdemona enters the Senate Chamber to declare her readiness to participate in Othello's life in a daring self-assertion,[72] she presents a testimony to her own alienation and initiates her isolation within the state. When she petitions the Duke to let her go with Othello to Cyprus (1.3.261), she saves herself from being ostracized and homeless, because, after her night at the Sagittary, in Venice she has nowhere to go.

Like the status of the vanishing point in a painting, Iago's position in the play is ambiguous. He acts as a character in the action and as its author at the same time. His position defines his identity, and he does not represent any value. And still, he appears authentic to other characters. The status of the emotionless perfectionist at the point in our visual field where it has no depth is curiously impersonal. Iago acts in the play's world and is still somehow outside it, organizing the appearance, the relative position, and the meaning of everything within his well-defined scope of operation. Characters in *Othello* behave, think, and speak in a way that betrays an awareness of their status relative to such a superior, god-like point of view. The remark Cassio makes to Iago about the lieutenant who is "to be saved before the ancient" (2.3.91f) betrays a way of thinking that is dominated by the importance of status. Iago, who has emptied out his identity in his transformation in the first scene, acts as the center of gravitation in the field of the play and defines the function of characters.

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[72] At the same time, her confidence results from her investment of real emotion into Othello's discursive identity.

Renaissance painters who acquired the technique of linear perspective created pictures, illustrating this pulling effect toward the emptiness of the vanishing point, which is somehow both within the three-dimensional space they created and outside it. Paolo Uccello's painting titled *The Hunt in the Forest*[73] from around 1470 evokes a similar sensation with the hunters riding or running toward what seems the distant center of the deep, dark forest. Although we can see very few straight lines pointing toward it, even the dogs and the deer they are chasing race away from us to diminish in size and then disappear completely close to the geometric center of the panel.[74] Both Othello and Emilia fear Iago and serve him, and their movements gesture toward his character that dominates the annihilating center of the plot. Othello, who is about to wriggle out of the sexual and emotional attachment to his wife and of the bond of a friendship to Cassio, is especially vulnerable to the void the presence of Iago's character creates. Othello is sliding on a slippery slope toward this void like an abyss, and barely has something to hang on to.

Although Brunelleschi's way to represent three-dimensional space on the canvas is innovative in its appearance, in fact it preserved a medieval, or even more ancient, world view. James Burke reproduces a fourteenth-century fresco from the Guidalotti (Spanish) Chapel in the Basilica of Santa Maria Novella in Florence to illustrate the tendency in the medieval visual arts to represent figures in size proportionate to their importance from God's point of view.[75] In this fresco the "relative status" of figures "is conventionally indicated by size."[76] Accordingly, saints are larger than "the good people of their flock, who are, in turn, bigger than sinful dancers."[77] The size of a character depended on his or her liturgical value in the story even though their relative position on

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[73] Paolo (Di Dono) Uccello, *The Hunt in the Forest*, c. 1470, tempera and oil, with traces of gold, on panel, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.
[74] Giorgio Vasari blames the Florentine painter for neglecting "human figures and animals" and concentrating, instead, "on problems of perspective," which rendered his talent "sterile" as a result. Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Artists* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) 74. *ebrary Reader*. 7 May 2014.
[75] Andrea di Bonaiuto (Andrea da Firenze), *Allegory of the Active and Triumphant Church and the Dominican Order*, 1365–67, fresco, Spanish Chapel of the Basilica of Santa Maria Novella.
[76] John T. Paoletti and Gary M. Radke, *Art in Renaissance Italy* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997) 150.
[77] James Burke, *The Day the Universe Changed* (Boston, Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1985) 58.

the surface of the wall does not reflect this: small *female* figures dancing and playing music appear above the bigger good *men*, who stand next to the even larger shape of saints. So, compared to a picture in mathematical perspective, figures here seem to be randomly placed.

Brunelleschi, in comparison, seems rather to have arranged in a visually appealing, unified, and centrally organized scheme an in fact ideologically motivated view of the world that was already in place before him.[78] His merit is then primarily in arranging in a picture objects and figures that acknowledge their dependence on a ruling center not merely in their relative size but also in their strictly regulated relative position. Iago as the organizing center in the play represents a stabilizing, conservative force similar to that of the vanishing point in a picture of linear perspective.

Two sixteenth-century Italian political thinkers Giovanni Botero and Niccolò Machiavelli represent contrasting views concerning individual male virtue in public affairs: their different approaches can be aligned with principles of intrinsic values and the power to create an impression of their presence, respectively, as Othello and Iago stand for them in the play. The reason of state, D. P. Waley argues, was "a catch-word in the second half of the sixteenth century—not in Italy alone."[79] Botero remarks in the 1589 "Dedication" to his book *The Reason of State* that he found the notion "a constant subject of discussion."[80] I oppose in this chapter Iago's skillful use of discourse from an ambiguous position analogous to that of the head of state, on the one hand, to horizontal relations between selves as exemplified between Desdemona and Othello, as Othello recalls it in his "unvarnished tale" (1.3.92) in the trial scene, and between Desdemona and Cassio in the way she takes his point of view and represents it to her husband from the beginning of Act 3, scene 3, on the

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[78] "Linear perspective […] was derived from the optics of Euclid [who] analyzed vision in terms of a cone emanating from the eye. Perspective is the application of Euclid's visual cone to a glass plane intersecting it." Nicholas J. Wade, *Perception and Illusion: Historical Perspectives* (New York: Springer Science, 2005) 8.
[79] D. P. Waley, "Introduction," *The Reason of State* by Giovanni Botero, transl. P. J. and D. P. Waley, Rare Masterpieces of Philosophy and Science Ser. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956) vii–xi. viii.
[80] Giovanni Botero, *The Reason of State*, transl. P. J. and D. P. Waley, Rare Masterpieces of Philosophy and Science Ser. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956) xiii.

other. Botero, in a way parallel to this, sets up an opposition between "things being permissible by Reason of State and others by conscience" (xiv). In his reaction to Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince*, Botero was trying to restore "conscience" to "its universal jurisdiction" not only in private life but also "over all that concerns man in his public" life as well (xiv). Inherent values like "valour" (52) are worth more for Botero than a skillful use of rhetoric. Accordingly, he recommends a virtue often associated with good women, silence, to men who want to achieve success in action. A ruler, he advises, should prefer achieving "his purpose with deeds" to doing so by using "words." And when he still has to speak, he should "avoid overstatement and hyperbole." Instead of a flexibility in improvisation, he recommends a "firmness of will" in keeping "one's word" (54).

Although Botero was aware of the importance of Machiavellian ideas like "religion and piety" in maintaining obedience in a Christian state (67) and that the image of a "common enemy" will drive "evil humors […] elsewhere" (77), he still tried to undo *The Prince*'s "break with […] idealism"[81] and opposed its explicit argument that "good government requires the skillful use of cruelty and deception" (3). His efforts were futile: not many people read, let alone refer to, Botero today, while Machiavelli's ideas are alive. In one respect, the history of Machiavelli's reception is similar to Iago's shifting evaluation in *Othello* criticism: Machiavelli is no longer "seen as evil through and through" (3) but often considered "a 'realist' or a 'result-oriented' thinker" (4). He wrote *The Prince*, early in the sixteenth century, soon after Italian states, "the republics of Florence and Venice" among them, enlarged the territories under their control and, as a result, a "more distant and impersonal rule of a few controlling regimes replaced the face-to-face style of government of hundreds of formerly independent communes" (7). Therefore, a rhetorical approach to identity came to dominate Italy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as opposed to a chivalric ideal, and the interest of a kingdom, a duchy, or a republic had to define the function of the

[81] William J. Connell, "Introduction: The Puzzle of *The Prince*," *The Prince* by Niccolò Machiavelli, transl. and ed. William J. Connell, The Bedford Series in History and Culture Ser. (Boston, New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005) 1.

individual in the state. Machiavel's words in the "Prologue" to Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* allow us a glimpse into the contradictory reactions in the England of the late sixteenth century[82] to an explicit formulation of such political developments: "Admired I am of those who hate me most."[83]

Venice, "the printing capital of Europe," played an important part in the appearance of *The Prince* in print before 1550. By this time, "European interpretations of Machiavelli had firmly coalesced around two rival readings of his works:" some regarded him as "an agent of the Devil," while others as "the apostle of secular republicanism" (22–24). The long-term transformation in the critical reception of Iago's ambiguous position inside the plot and outside it, of his function as interpreter or instigator, as evil tempter or the embodiment of the state, provides the context for our attempt to understand Iago's power over Othello and Othello's dependence on Iago's character which was influenced, according to Connell, simply by "the diabolical Machiavelli" (25) who was, at the same time, according to a note on the title page of a copy of the first edition that might have belonged to Queen Elizabeth, "an enemy of tyrants" (26).

Machiavelli had less concern for questions of content in religion or politics than for the abilities and skills of "a political and military leader."[84] His discovery that politics are an autonomous system of ideas and field of practice was, Connell argues, "as revolutionary and as solid as the European discovery of the New World." Once this has taken place, attempts "to bring politics and ethics back together again" could never succeed (28). A new sense of skill and professionalism in leadership gives an undoubted advantage to Iago over Othello, and this was also part of Machiavelli's experience in government in Florence, when new technology, "including artillery and

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[82] Marlowe wrote the play in 1589 or 1590. "It was first performed in early 1592 at the Rose theatre." David Bevington, "Introduction," *The Jew of Malta* by Christopher Marlowe.
[83] Christopher Marlowe, *The Jew of Malta*, ed. David Bevington, Revels Students Editions Ser. (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997) Prologue 9. Bernard Spivack claims that the "age was aware of Machiavellianism before it was aware of Machiavelli." *Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil: The History of a Metaphor in Relation to his Major Villains* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958) 376.
[84] Connell 13.

firearms, demanded professional expertise" (16). All this might explain the perceived nihilism in Iago's character:[85] the rules of politics, Connell argues, could be determined simply by the selfish need of the prince to survive, "without […] reference to religious and moral considerations."[86]

Besides Othello's guilt as the source of his vulnerability, Iago's power over Othello in the Temptation Scene derives from the effect of the Machiavellian principle in Iago's figure: "it is much safer" for him "to be feared than loved,"[87] because Othello's fear of a Iago who "knows more […] than he unfolds" (3.3.260) deters Othello from questioning his insinuations about an affair between Desdemona and Cassio[88] simply on account of its perceptual impossibility. Making himself feared, as Machiavelli recommends that the prince do, by pretending to withhold knowledge (he responds to Othello's "I'll know thy thoughts" by saying, "You cannot, if my heart were in your hand, / Nor shall not, whilst 'tis in my custody," 175–77), Iago also avoids being hated, for "being feared and being not hated may exist together very well," according to Machiavelli (92). And, indeed, Othello says gratefully, "I am bound to thee forever" (3.3.229).

3.4. The Motive of Iago's "Malignity"

The ancient's simultaneous fascination with and "disgust for the flesh"[89] is an essential part, if not the inexplicit core tenet, of the cult that he stands for and that he drives to a culmination in the ultimate observance, the sacrifice of Desdemona. The act that Othello carries out evokes and enacts but at the same time overwrites and stifles her bold and intolerable sexuality. Iago himself has presumably completed the cycle of substituting the "desirability" of a woman for his own "desire" (135) as a source of the stimulation of his own sexual fantasies and this way objectified,

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[85] Pechter 38.
[86] Connell 28.
[87] Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, transl. and ed. William J. Connell, The Bedford Series in History and Culture Ser. (Boston, New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005) 91.
[88] Spivack remarks that Iago has a "cynical Machiavellianism toward sex, which hovers over everyone in the play" (428f).
[89] Pechter 77.

depersonalized, and generalized his own libido. As a result, now he can locate his alienated sexuality in other bodies (in Cassio's, in Othello's, and in Desdemona's) and find vicarious satisfaction in a literal and pornographic rendering of desire and bodily acts in a vividly descriptive, evocative, and imposing discourse. Here is how he depicts his disgust for his own wife's body when Cassio kisses Emilia in what he calls a "bold show of courtesy:" "Sir," Iago addresses Cassio, "would she give you so much of her lips / As of her tongue she oft bestows on me, / You would have enough" (2.1.101–104). The emptiness of his heart is sufficient motive for Iago to fill it with a medley of free-floating and detached fantasies about a fulfilment he cannot have.

To attribute a mere "lust of the blood" (1.3.330) to the freshly married couple seems a misunderstanding of both Desdemona's and Othello's original motives for choosing each other, but accepting it might provide Othello with a plausible excuse for withdrawing from the responsibilities his marriage to Desdemona entails. He made Desdemona and Cassio depend on him by creating them his wife and his lieutenant respectively; but from the moment we encounter him in his first dialogue with Iago at the beginning of the second scene, Othello is ready to betray them. This might encourage Iago to overemphasize the role of sexuality among the three of them and draw up a hypothetical but powerful road map to satiation and to a desire for variety to move the plot forward and to provide himself with an opportunity to vicariously relive the cycle he has already completed in his own marriage. "These Moors are changeable in their wills," he declares to Roderigo and continues to explain:

> The food that to him now is as luscious as locusts shall be to him shortly as bitter as coloquintida. She must change for youth; when she is sated with his body, she will find the error of her choice. She must have change, she must.
>
> (1.3.339–343)

Still, however closely Iago's script maps out the trajectory Othello's inchoate hypocrisy anticipates, it takes a long time and a fierce struggle for the Moor to resign himself to following it and taking the last step.

4. Othello's Vulnerability

Othello's willingness to inhabit an imaginary construct seems to dovetail with Iago's intentions, with his expectation that by "throwing but shows of service on" Othello, he will convince the general to join him in doing Iago "homage" (1.1.54, 56). Othello appears so willing to replace Desdemona in his affections by the pursuit of a companionship of a different sort, of an acceptance in the abstract body of the Venetian state,[90] toward which Iago might guide him, as if his marriage to Desdemona had only been a preliminary stage on the way to this integration. Indeed, there seem to be two ways to citizenship for Othello, one through marriage and another due to merit. He might have considered these two ways complementary sometime before we first encounter him in front of the Sagittary, but, once he is confident he has secured his marriage to the daughter of a Venetian senator, he turns his attention to how he might best appear in the eyes of the state. Geraldo U. de Sousa explains that the so-called "*Serrata* laws (1497–1535)" made marriage to a Venetian noblewoman desirable in terms of status by securing "noble identity" for a child born of such a union. As a result, de Sousa quotes Dennis Romano, "'Women's bodies served as sites for demonstrations of family wealth and power,' and 'helped establish noble identity'."[91] This is one reason for Othello to consider a marriage to Desdemona a step toward fulfilment in the more abstract sense of becoming a full member of the state. Othello is not a "natural citizen" in terms of

[90] A. D. Nuttall comments on Venice as an abstraction in Shakespeare characterizing it as being in fact "nowhere, suspended between sea and sky" and receiving and utilizing "all kinds of people." A. D. Nuttall, *A New Mimesis: Shakespeare and the Representation of Reality* (London: Methuen, 1983) 141. Qtd. in Thomas Moisan, "Relating Things to the State: 'The State' and the Subject of *Othello*," *Othello: New Critical Essays*, ed. Philip C. Kolin (New York and London: Routledge, 2002) 189–202. 195.
[91] Geraldo U. de Sousa, *At Home in Shakespeare's Tragedies* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010) 89.

belonging to the "ethnic," the "linguistic,"[92] or, more important, the religious group that predominates the territory of Venice; therefore, he has to undergo a transformation in terms of Baldus de Ubaldis, fourteenth-century commentator on the Justinian law, from "natural man" to "*politicus*," that is, "a member of the State." In this sense, he can legally acquire citizenship ("*civilitas acquisita*") "through marriage or through residence" (135).

On the other hand, the marriage had taken place before the theatrical time of the play began, and Othello presents us with his own love merely in the framework of a narrative. When we first encounter him, chatting with Iago in the street during his wedding night, we hear him emphasize the "services which I have done the signiory" (1.2.18), in the first lines he utters onstage, rather than his conjugal bliss. Thomas Moisan points out that "the discourse of 'the state' serves Othello" both "to elude detention at the beginning of the play" and in his final emphasis on the "service" he has "done the state" and on his belief that "they know't" (5.2.349). Moisan refers to Gasparo Contareni's remark that "some forrain men and strangers haue beene adopted into this number of citizens [i.e. 'natives of "the state"' of Venice], eyther in regard of their great nobility, or that they had beene dutifull towards the state, or else had done vnto them some notable seruice."[93] Even before he elaborates, in the trial scene, on his asceticism and his dedication to "business" (1.3.273) in an attempt to counter Desdemona's unabashed insistence on participating in the "rites for which I love him" (1.3.259), Othello gives signs of his desire to be rewarded for the merits he earned in the services of the state. While Desdemona lies safely "stowed" (1.2.63) away from her father in the Sagittary, Othello spends time with Iago, ready to "be found" by the "raisèd father" (1.2.30, 29) but happy to meet Cassio first and be "hotly called for" by the Duke in a state "business of some heat" (44, 40). Only once he expresses his satisfaction with the news of the emergency and

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[92] Walter Ullmann, *Medieval Foundations of Renaissance Humanism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977) 135.
[93] Moisan 194f. Moisan quotes Gasparo Contareni, *The Commonwealth of Venice*, transl. Lewis Lewkenor (1599) 18.

his call to the meeting of the Senate at the Ducal Palace, does he excuse himself for a moment to "spend a word here in the house" (1.2.48), by which he refers to where he left Desdemona. The senator's daughter has freshly eloped with him and, having abandoned her father and her "Good name," "the immediate jewel of" her soul (3.3.168f) for Othello's sake, is presumably staying at the Sagittary by herself.

If, as his conduct in the first act indicates, Othello does not need to be persuaded to betray Desdemona because, as Leavis said, "the essential traitor is within the gates" to begin with, then, Pechter concludes, "there is no problem of trying to explain Othello's transformation because there is no transformation to explain" (105). Yes, I would argue, Othello does undergo a transformation, and it is indeed complex. In the scene he enters with the aside "Oh, hardness to dissemble!" (3.4.28), he will realize he is losing Desdemona and will make her responsible for this loss. Here, the absence of the magic handkerchief will play a crucial role as a symbol of Othello's realization, and his demand that she recover it is his futile attempt to restore their union in love, which suggests that merit and marriage, political function and inherent values, like the Reason of State and conscience in Botero, and politics and ethics according to Connell, are hard, if not impossible, to reconcile. At the same time, Othello's displaced insistence on the visible presence of the handkerchief to secure marital love, which should be the inherent meaning of it as a talisman wherever it happens to be, changes its magic value from a connective tissue to a mere piece of evidence in the Augustinian sense of signification with an added Iagovian literalness in the connection between "sign" and "thing." The handkerchief as evidence will then serve Othello as an excuse to finally condemn Desdemona and satisfy the "disgust for the flesh" which, in turn, works as a pretense under which he can hide the actual motive of the murder: the suppression of his own guilt about the original sin he had committed before the action of the play began. Othello abused the trust of those who depended on him, namely that of Desdemona, of Cassio, and of Iago. And for what purpose did he

betray them all? Not for the sake of his religious convictions but for his self-interest in securing his position in the state of Venice.

4.1. Othello's Transformation

Pechter begins his analysis of Othello's transformation by pointing out the striking contrast of the calmness in his first appearance onstage to the "ranting buffoon,"[94] the "extravagant and wheeling stranger" (1.1.137), as Iago depicted him in the first scene. The images in Othello's speech in the trial scene overwhelm the senses of his listeners (42); however, Pechter observes, his love for Desdemona is fraught with guilt (40). Pechter calls attention to the moment in the Temptation Scene when Othello "takes the initiative" (83) in his own degradation by attributing Desdemona's love for him to "nature erring from itself" (3.3.244), which then makes Pechter ask the fundamental question why Othello should, "against all evidence and self-interest, buy into the view Iago offers [Othello] of himself and Desdemona?" (84). It might happen, indeed, "against all evidence," as something that appears impossible, but if the Moor believed Iago against his "self-interest," his acquiescence to the ancient's insinuation of Cassio's betrayal and Desdemona's infidelity would not strike us as somehow still plausible. But it does. We accept that Othello cooperates willingly with Iago in the construction of a narrative, first only in the abstract, like a thought experiment, even though it might contradict "all evidence." However, he does so, I argue, in his "self-interest." He asserts, "once in doubt," he would be "resolved," and he assures Iago he would never "turn the business of my soul / To such exsufflicate and blown surmises" (3.3.194–197) but that, instead, he will "see before I doubt; when I doubt, prove; / And on the proof, there is no more but this — / Away at once with love or jealousy" (205–207). And still, Othello does not act upon these—his own—words. He does as Estragon and Vladimir repeatedly do in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for*

[94] Pechter 38.

Godot.[95] As a result, it sounds like the general is blowing hot air and, like the Player Queen does in *Hamlet* according to Gertrude, he "protests too much."[96] The rest of his utterances in the Temptation Scene prove that, for some reason, "To be […] in doubt" (194) is exactly what Othello wants to do.

This is not the first instance in which we catch Othello in the act of saying something and observing in a helpless astonishment how reality slides from below his words. The play consists of competing narratives, as recent critics believe, but it is not a mere word game. Othello and Iago compete against each other in their power to create a sense of reality: in other words, Othello and Iago, to put it bluntly, engage in a "bragging" contest throughout the play and try to impress each other mutually with some "fantastical lies" (2.1.219) to always outdo a previous one and still make the next lie sound plausible. However, those critics who pay attention only to the discursive quality of the play should not forget that each successful lie derives its power from its intricate relationship to what has seemed experiential reality before and which it ingenuously (re)interprets. In this sense, we might trace the chain of lies and interpretations back to events that took place even before the action begins and about which we have only a few vague hints to rely on. Gestures of meaning-making in *Othello* go back to a time "before 'meaning' meant anything at all."[97]

In saying, "Nay, yet there's more in this," Othello hangs his curiosity about what may lurk behind Iago's claim that "Cassio's an honest man" on more than the mere hedges "I think" and "Why then," with which Iago qualifies his statement in what comes to "Why then, I think Cassio's an honest man" (3.3.142). Certainly, Iago said that "Men should be what they seem" (139) and that "Ha! I like not that" (35, when Othello and Iago saw Cassio leaving Desdemona) before, but Othello's

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[95] "ESTRAGON: I'm going. *He does not move.*" "VLADIMIR: I'll give it [his hat] to him [to Lucky]. *He does not move*." Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot: Tragicomedy in Two Acts* (New York: Grove Press, 1954) Act 1, pp. 9, 27.
[96] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, *The Norton Shakespeare*. *Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York, London: W W Norton, 1997) 1668–1756. 3.2.210.
[97] T. S. Eliot, "Introduction," *Savonarola: A Dramatic Poem,* by Charlotte Eliot (London: R. Cobden-Sanderson, 1926) vii–xii. viii. Qtd. in Catherine Mary McLoughlin, *The Modernist Party* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013) 63, n85.

readiness "against all evidence" to go along with Iago still requires an explanation. Especially Othello's silent acceptance of Iago's jump from a long belaboring of the point that a "good name" is the "jewel" of one's soul in a *non sequitur* to "Oh, beware, my lord, of jealousy" (169, 179) should warn us that the lock Iago is picking here might open a floodgate of memories in Othello and make him suspect that Iago indeed does see and know "more, much more, than he unfolds" (260) and, therefore, he deserves respect. Is it in Othello's interest to question him further and to prove him wrong, which would be still so easy to do; or is it better for him to stop pushing him, to give in at least seemingly, and to pretend that he believes his absurd lie in the hope that Iago would be merciful and would not pursue the matter further? But what is that matter?, we have to ask with Brabantio and, following him, with all the main characters echoing the question throughout the play.[98]

Indeed, Iago's lie has to be absurd to show to what length Othello is ready to go in accepting a "fantastical" suggestion only to avoid an inconvenient confrontation with his own dishonesty. The lie has to be absurd to make Othello appear a fool to himself, and Othello has to play along with it to prove that, although it is not possible, it is believable. According to Aristotle, "the poet should prefer probable impossibilities to improbable possibilities,"[99] and Iago's poetic "trick"[100] on Othello, and on us, follows this precept. Too much questioning might force Othello to a full disclosure of his own dealings, of the original sin he committed against all of the parties involved here: against Desdemona, against Cassio, and against Iago. Therefore, it is still better for Othello to leave things

[98] "What is the matter there?," Brabantio asks at 1.1.85 to trigger a series of similar questions by Othello, the Duke, Montano, Desdemona, Cassio, Emilia, Iago, Bianca, and even Gratiano throughout the play text.
[99] Aristotle, *Poetics*, XXIV. 7–10, p. 95.
[100] "'Probability' here is […] a legalized trick played on the reader by the poet—provided he has the skill. The end justifies the means; and the end is after all nothing but a low form of pleasure," Gerald F. Else comments in *Aristotle's Poetics: The Argument* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967) 630.

hanging in the air and to try to appease Iago along with his own conscience, with the reiterated epithet "honest" (259) which hides more meaning than it expresses.[101]

We need not argue that Othello is ready to go to extreme lengths, indeed, in order to believe in what he must know is not true: the offering of Desdemona in what he "thought a sacrifice," which must not be called what it is, that is, "murder" (5.2.69), speaks eloquently for this. Orson Welles acts out the altered state of mind in Othello particularly effectively when he enters the final scene of the play and the theatrical space of the bed chamber where Desdemona is already asleep. Welles's Othello works himself up to a trance by a chant-like intonation, lengthening the monophthong of the repeated "cause" to create a monotonous rhythm in "It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul. / Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars! / It is the cause" (5.2.1–3).[102] Othello knows that now he must not mix up the Desdemona he is sacrificing with the one who "gave me for my pains a world of sighs," who "loved me for the dangers I had passed," and whom "I loved" because "she did pity them" (1.3.161, 169f). He plans his act in advance cautioning himself not to "expostulate with her, lest her body and beauty unprovide my mind again" (4.1.191). But Iago must be appeased and his story must be acted out in the same sense that controls Emilia when she filches the handkerchief: "What he will do with it," she says in a childish attempt to deny her complicity, "Heaven knows, not I; / I nothing but to please his fantasy" (3.3.314–16). Similarly, Othello performs the act for Iago: "This night, Iago" (4.1.191f), he promises.

Othello's self-delusion, however, goes deeper than keeping himself from admitting he is punishing Desdemona, not merely in the absence of substantial evidence, but for a crime she could

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[101] The principle behind Iago's "trick" on Othello is similar to the one Quomodo practices on Easye, the "unsuspicious" visitor to London in Thomas Middleton's *Michaelmas Term*, composed probably in the same year, 1604, that *Othello* was first performed in London. George R. Price, "Introduction," *Michaelmas Term*, by Thomas Middleton, ed. George R. Price (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1976) 11–21. 15. Price sees in the comedy a "pointed commentary on Jacobean society" (15) and traces the tradition of "cozening" as far back as Petronius' *Satyricon* (16) in the first century AD. While Machiavelli discovered, and by his influence possibly precipitated, a separation of politics from ethics, *Michaelmas Term* reflects, in the wake of the devastating effect on the economy of the activities of "individualists like Quomodo" (18), a rift in popular opinion between economics and ethics (19).

[102] Orson Welles, dir., *Othello*, Mercury Productions Inc. and Les Films Marceau, 1952.

not have committed. The profoundness of his deliberate identification with the role of the deceived husband is perhaps even more astounding than in the final scene, indeed, in the Temptation Scene. In a mood composed of one part self-imposed paranoia, one part self-doubt, and one part self-pity, Othello is "searching" for a possible reason for why he should be abused. "Haply, for I am black / And have not those soft parts of conversation / That chamberers have," he ruminates in the Temptation Scene, "or for I am declined / Into the vale of years" (3.3.280–83). And then, as if giving up to ever fathom the proverbially treacherous depths of the female soul by trying to explain it by mere objective facts, he adds, "yet that's not much — / She's gone" (283f). To convince himself that the wrong Desdemona has done him is irreparable, he concludes laconically, "I am abused" (284). From this only, from the trumped-up charge of her possible unfaithfulness, that is, does Othello have to derive, certainly, and certainly hypocritically, his verdict: "and my relief / Must be to loath her" (284f). With the "must" he makes the welcome "relief," which he has to thank Iago's invention, sound like fate. To be able to believe in her culpability, Othello has to suppress his solidarity with his wife.

In fact, the real reason why Desdemona has to appear unfaithful, we suspect, is Othello's hidden resentment against the woman whose hand in marriage, in the circumstances of a war emergency, did not raise him to a more stable position in Venice.[103] She offered her body and soul instead, "trumpeting," to his embarrassment, to the decision-making political body of the City[104] her intimate subjection to him. As a result, Othello feels compelled to subtly but firmly deny, in front of

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[103] While Othello attempts to approach and win over the father through the daughter ("command with years"), Desdemona embarks Othello's discursive "carrack" with her heartfelt emotions. Both Desdemona and Cassio let their fortunes depend on Othello, only Iago saves himself from Othello's discursive power by not believing in him.

[104] According to Quentin Skinner, "the Venetians managed to combine their political liberty with the avoidance of faction." The unique and enduring solution was first described by Pier Paolo Vergerio in a letter to the Chancellor of Venice in 1394. This argues that the Venetian political system followed Plato's *Laws* in combining "three 'pure' forms" of government, "the result being an amalgam of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy." The three leading political agents embodying these forms of rule were "the Doge representing the monarchical element, the Senate the aristocratic and the *Consiglio Grande* the element of democracy. Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*. Volume One: The Renaissance (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978) 140.

the Senate, being involved sexually with Desdemona, who is now held in bad repute even by her father for eloping with Othello. By taking seriously Othello's invitation to participate in his life, Desdemona compromised Othello's public image; by presenting her undivided identity in a spirited body, she set off, as with a foil, Othello's stylized, formal entry into what he perceived to be an abstract Venetian political elite. Othello, at the same time, has received his own perception of his "visage in his mind" (1.3.254) from Desdemona, and now, transformed as he believes he is, he expects the Senate and the Duke to see him as an eminent servant, the way he sees himself, having earned incontestable merit in the service of an abstract state. Now that she has helped his sense of identity emerge, Desdemona appears to Othello to taint his hoped-for discursive incorporation in the state with the noise of her too corporeal "trumpet" (1.3.252).

4.2. The Handkerchief: Is the Transformation Reversible?

The handkerchief offers a point of reaction where Othello attempts to break out of Iago's paralyzing early modern discursive and visual regime. Since the power he attributes to it is supposed to constrain the husband, not the wife, Othello's account of the story of the handkerchief seems to have the conative function[105] of an appeal to Desdemona to stop him in his fall into an abyss. An Egyptian gave it to his mother,[106] he says, telling her that it would

> subdue my father
> Entirely to her love, but if she lost it
> Or made a gift of it, my father's eye

[105] In the sense Roman Jacobson uses the term, this is the function of language directed to the addressee, and it "finds its purest grammatical expression in the vocative and imperative." Roman Jacobson, *Language in Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1987) 67.

[106] According to Othello's other version of the origin of the handkerchief, his father gave it to Othello's mother (5.2.224). Lynda Boose asserts that the two versions "make perfect sense." The second story, she argues, "does not really contradict the first one but rather amplifies it. Important here is," she emphasizes, "our realization that the entire legend and almost every reference to the handkerchief must be read in terms of *symbolic logic*" which "elevates the act [of sexual union] from the degradation of Iago's pornographic literalism" (66f).

> Should hold her loathed, and his spirits should hunt
>
> After new fancies (3.4.55–59).

If he purported to try and use the handkerchief as a means of recovering her from *her* alleged "new fancies," it would be a third layer in his dissimulation to conceal *his* original betrayal of her.[107] I do not assume that Othello is that cunning and unscrupulous. Still, although at the beginning of the dialogue I quoted above he complains in an aside about the "hardness to dissemble" (3.4.28), he goes on, before he mentions the handkerchief, to accuse Desdemona of having a "liberal heart" and having made the marriage vow without meaning it: "The hearts of old gave hands, / But our new heraldry is hands, not hearts" (3.4.40f). Othello's image evokes the unity in courtship that, he complains, Desdemona has misused. He attempts to reaffirm the truthfulness in such signification by insisting on the iconic, metonymical reading of a "hot, and moist" hand that "argues fruitfulness and liberal heart" (33, 32) and a similar connection between "sweating" and "rebel[lion]" (36f)—bodily signs of emotional states which cannot be arbitrarily manipulated and the alteration in which[108] inevitably indicates, or even entails, physiological changes in the body. He is so preoccupied with this that he understands Desdemona's word "promise" (42f), meant otherwise, as if it belonged in the same context. After such preparation, he suddenly complains about suffering from "a salt a sorry rheum" (45) that only the touch of the handkerchief can alleviate. All this clearly indicates that Othello does not use the handkerchief to stage a jealous scene around it but that he desires to be "subdued" by Desdemona's physical power of love with the help of a token that should secure, because of the almost forgotten magic in it, the truthfulness of the outward signs of that love.

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[107] According to such a scenario, Othello would act as if he was desperate to win her affection back to make his accusation of unfaithfulness against her look more authentic, which he faked in the first place to cover up his initial act of abuse of her.

[108] Such as a "sequester from liberty, fasting and prayer, / Much castigation, exercise devout" (3.4.34f).

While it was around him, the handkerchief was a mere "napkin," "too little" (3.3.304) even, for Othello. Desdemona, however, cherished it, personified it, even before she knew about its history: "she so loves the token," Emilia says in a brief soliloquy, "That she reserves it evermore about her / To kiss and talk to" (310, 312f). Only when he starts fantasizing about Desdemona becoming common property among "the general camp, / Pioneers and all" (362f), will Othello be ready to understand the significance of the handkerchief in somebody else's hands. Now, after the fact, he seems to recognize in the familiar words of the mythological warning the way he disregarded it and let his own "eye / […] hold her loathed, and his spirits […] hunt / After new fancies" (3.4.57–59). Immediately after Desdemona, the Venetian virgin, with the power of the patroness of the city in her voice, "trumpet[ed] to the world" how her "heart's *subdued* / Even to the very quality of my lord" (1.3.252f, emphasis added), he renounced her in front of the senate to secure their trust in his reliability as commander:

> when light-winged toys
> Of feathered Cupid seel with wanton dullness
> My speculative and officed instruments,
> That my disports corrupt and taint my business,

he swore,

> Let huswives make a skillet of my helm,
> And all indign and base adversities
> Make head against my estimation! (1.3.270–76)

To excuse his "eye" for "hold[ing] her loathed" then, he called it "speculative and officed instruments," that is, not his own property but that of the state of Venice. "[T]hou must not trust thy owne eyes," Swetnam warns, as we read above, "for they will deceiue thee" (45) in your choice of a woman. However, the "light-winged toys / Of feathered Cupid" suddenly assume an ominous significance for Othello when they might be lost and "the thing I love" alienated for "others' use"

(3.3.289f) in "her stolen hours of lust" (3.3.355). They become the "fountain from the which my current runs / Or else dries up" (4.2.61f), and Othello begs Desdemona to guard them by making the handkerchief "a darling like your precious eye" (3.4.62). These are not the words of a man raging with jealousy, hurt in his pride and thirsting for revenge; rather, they express the anguish of a guilty conscience anxious for his salvation.

Othello now unexpectedly taps into the "deep play"[109] in the signifying power of the handkerchief in his appeal to Desdemona to make herself "amiable" (3.4.55) to him as his mother did to her husband by using the charm of the handkerchief on him. He emphasizes the sympathetic magic in the absent handkerchief when appealing to Desdemona's power to save him from the consequences of their alienation. Although in his dialogues with Iago the immediate visual presence of the handkerchief appears to be of critical importance, a matter of life and death, in his detailed description of it to Desdemona Othello does not even mention its color or shape. The object emerges rather in the form of a story of gestures, and Othello now hangs his hope on the power of repetition, imitation, and metonymy that it might evoke.

With whom does Othello's salvation lie? With Iago, who instructs him in seeing with an imperial eye and judging by the mechanics of exits and entrances, the disappearance and reemergence of an object, and by the surface meaning of a dumb show? Or rather with Desdemona, who meets him in the "story" (1.3.160) of his "pilgrimage" (155) and grasps his identity "in his mind" (1.3.254), but whose "honor is an essence that's not seen" (4.1.16)? Othello's account of the handkerchief is an attempt to restore credibility to a way of perceiving that does not promise large vistas but connects one living being to another through the repetition of certain gestures in time and through the memory this keeps alive and passes on.

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[109] The words are from Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," *Daedalus* 101.1 (Winter 1972) 1–17. *JSTOR*. Web. 28 Feb. 2014.

Desdemona's perception, on the other hand, is not literally, or even primarily, visual. It allows for role-play and imitation based on sympathy, without mixing up bodies of similar appearance. While she acts in behalf of Cassio to effect his reinstatement with Othello, Desdemona invents a role-play between herself and the demoted lieutenant: "When I have spoke of you dispraisingly," she says to Othello, Cassio "Hath ta'en your part" (3.3.78f), thus attempting to bend Othello's will through his officer's emotional identification with him. In the visual field controlled by the imperial vanishing point that does not recognize differences in individual disposition or chronology, this substitution might strike Othello as an imminent danger of the simultaneous presence of his lieutenant replacing him.[110] Desdemona, however, goes on to try and make her husband understand the life-preserving power of friendship by reassuring his sense of identity in terms of bodily sensations: "'Tis as I should entreat you wear your gloves, / Or feed on nourishing dishes, or keep you warm, / Or sue to you to do a peculiar profit / To your own person" (84–87). The sensations she addresses here to invoke an image in Othello of himself arise in the skin and in internal organs, not in the eye.

5. Othello's Victims

Othello begins "honesting" Iago long before the Temptation Scene, at the end of the trial scene. While he involved Cassio, probably because he was an outsider from Florence and thus, without connections in Venice, would depend more on him alone, in the confidential preparations for the risky enterprise of eloping with the daughter of a senator, a leader of the Venetian aristocracy, on which his employment depends, he did not confide it to his ancient. Moreover, he rewarded Cassio even before the wedding with the position of lieutenancy, and, as a result, he could

[110] Patricia Cahill sums up the function of an individual man based on the view of military science books on the centrally organized Elizabethan warfare as follows: "Paradoxically, even as they disseminated the notion that each man had a particular place that was 'his,' they transmitted the notion that men at war are virtually interchangeable." *"Tales of Iron Wars": Martial Bodies and Manly Economies in Elizabethan Culture*, Diss. (Columbia U, 2000) 60.

not fulfill Iago's ambition and expectation to be promoted. Thus, by marrying Desdemona, Othello made the social status of all three characters, Desdemona, Iago, and Cassio, depend exceedingly on himself. However, as soon as the wedding has been in all haste administered and the adventure is over, Desdemona's and Cassio's importance for Othello's imaginary progress toward the center of power begins to fade, and this allows his own unfairness in passing Iago over, who is now flattering his narcissism and offering himself to guide him toward a higher sense of fulfillment, to emerge in his conscience.

The consummation of the marriage is not critical for Othello, since, as a result of her elopement to the Sagittary, Desdemona has been "corrupted" (1.3.62) in her father's eyes; to Brabantio she is "dead" (61), so there is no danger that he would "divorce" (1.2.14) Othello, as Iago threatens, and would take her back. Brabantio refuses to accommodate Desdemona in his house even for the duration of Othello's absence at the siege of Cyprus (1.3.242). Whether he is "fast married" (1.2.11) or not, Desdemona belongs to Othello now. Furthermore, the advantages of being married into the Senate, so to speak, evaporate for Othello with the emergency in Cyprus, which removes him instantly from Venice. We cannot consider this a punishment specifically for ruining the "good name" (3.3.172) of a senator's daughter and for offending Brabantio himself, but commissioning the Moor "Against the general enemy Ottoman" (1.3.51) in Cyprus, in spite of the fact that, as the Duke remarks, "we have there a substitute of most allowed sufficiency" (225f), namely Montano, sounds like a convenient measure.[111]

Othello knows that only Iago knows he has done something wrong and that Desdemona and Cassio do not. This knowledge constitutes Othello's vulnerability to Iago and, in turn, Desdemona's

[111] The Duke's decision might have recalled the removal of "[Negars] and blackamoors […] out of this her majesty's realm," as Queen Elizabeth's warrant from 1601, three years before the first recorded performance of *Othello* at Whitehall Palace in 1604 (Hall 2) formulated. In the Duke's estimate, "Th'affair cries haste, / And speed must answer it" (278f). Similarly, Elizabeth's warrant urged for a "speedy transportation" and emphasized that the order served "the good and welfare of her own natural subjects." Queen Elizabeth I, "Licensing Casper van Senden to Deport Negroes," *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, vol. 3, ed. Paul L. Hughes and James Francis Larkin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964–69) 221f. Qtd. William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. Kim F. Hall, 194f.

and Cassio's lack of such an understanding makes them vulnerable to Othello. Accordingly, Othello backs out of the responsibility for his other two victims and focuses his efforts to clear himself only in Iago's eyes. This interpretation contradicts the often reiterated claim that the play consists of mere narratives, because it anchors those narratives in the non-discursive substance of *guilt* which a fiction, even if taken literally, as it happens to Othello, cannot transmute into a mere text. Washing Othello clean inevitably entails besmirching both Desdemona's and Cassio's reputation.[112] This is what he calls "the cause" at his entry in the final scene. From the moment he appears onstage, he works his way in a direction where he expects the least resistance: he ingratiates himself with Iago and lets Desdemona and Cassio fall.

5.1. Cassio's Fall

Cassio cooperates submissively with Othello in being upstaged until he is formally demoted. Although Othello admits in the Temptation Scene that Cassio not only knew of his love "from first to last" but even "went between us very oft" (3.3.105, 109), and so he must have also known where to look for Othello on his wedding night, in front of the Sagittary he dutifully pretends not to have heard of the arrangement. "Ancient, what makes he here?," he asks Iago when Othello, after a chat with the ancient in the street, makes a call on his wife to "spend a word" with her as well. When Iago responds with a riddle, "he tonight hath boarded a land carack. / If it prove lawful prize, he's made forever" (1.2.49–51), Cassio keeps playing the innocent:

> I do not understand.
>
> IAGO: He's married.
>
> CASSIO: To who? (52)

[112] A text may wash guilt away, but it will not dissolve it. Therefore, the emblem titled "The Impossible," depicting two white men attempting to "wash, in vain, the Ethiopian" in Andrea Alciati's *Book of Emblems* sums up succinctly the paradox emerging in this interpretation of the play.

How Iago has found out about the wedding and the place where Othello "stowed" (1.2.63) Desdemona, as Brabantio puts it, we cannot tell, but Othello converses with him nonchalantly in front of the Sagittary about it. Although Cassio enters the Senate Chamber in the Ducal Palace together with Iago, when the Duke orders that Desdemona be summoned for testimony, Othello turns to Iago, not Cassio: "Ancient, conduct them. You best know the place" (1.3.123). Apparently, Cassio's role in the preparations has to remain confidential.

Since he attained the rank of lieutenant by doing Othello personal service, Cassio's status depends entirely on the general's pleasure. Julia Genster points out perspicaciously that the etymology of the word "lieutenant" exposes Cassio himself as a "place holder for his commanding officer,"[113] so that the designation excludes any outside support to his sense of identity. He is duly anxious about Othello's safety, as if it was his own, while he is expecting his arrival in Cyprus:

> Great Jove, Othello guard,
> And swell his sail with thine own powerful breath,
> That he may […]
> Give renewed fire to our extincted spirits,
> And bring all Cyprus comfort! (2.1.79–81, 83f)

His words betray a cosmic expansion of his own anxiety in his assumption that the island and the gods will share it with him. At the same time, Cassio accepts without complaint that Desdemona, who must have shared her secret thoughts and feelings with him while he acted in lieu of her wooer, is now "Left in the conduct of the bold Iago" (2.1.77) and not his. Cassio and the ancient have begun to change places in the general's perception already in the trial scene. Soon enough, Cassio

[113] Julia Genster, "Lieutenancy, Standing in, and *Othello*," *Critical Essays on Shakespeare's* Othello, ed. Anthony Gerard Barthelemy (New York: G. K. Hall; Toronto, New York: Maxwell Macmillan, 1994) 216–233. 217.

will act like the bucket "full of tears" and Iago like the "emptier ever dancing in the air" as they do in Richard's image in Shakespeare's *Richard II*.[114]

Cassio identifies with his function as a substitute, not only for Othello but also for Iago. He extends a "bold show" of courteous "manners" (2.1.101, 100) to Iago's wife while the ancient turns away from her in loathing. When on the night of "the revels" and "the celebration of his nuptial" (2.2.4f) Othello entrusts the responsibility for the guard to him, Cassio submits to Iago, who, he says, "hath direction what to do" (2.3.4). In spite of his awareness of his "unfortunate […] infirmity" (32f), he still drinks at Iago's bidding, saying, "it dislikes me" (37). When, as a result of fighting with the governor of Cyprus, he loses his rank in the military, he realizes he has been stripped of all there was to his identity. In fact, Othello used him and then discarded him in the service of his own desire to receive a confirmation of his sense of who he was. "Oh, I have lost my reputation! I have lost the immortal part of myself, and what remains is bestial" (240f), Cassio wails in despair. While he might have got his rank "without merit" (245), as Iago suggests, without it as support he is "now a sensible man, by and by a fool, and presently a beast!" (273). At this moment, he encounters his own insignificance outside the military order and sums it up in an image he assembles from the elements of a signifying system that used to be his own but that he does not control anymore. While he is doing so, he appears to himself as one who would "discourse fustian with one's own shadow" (253f). and recoils from it in horror: "One unperfectness shows me another, to make me frankly despise myself" (266f).

To make matters worse, he holds on to Iago's suggestion that the "punishment" might have been a mere gesture "in policy" (248) which can be undone by a petition: "Our general's wife is now the general […]. Confess yourself freely to [Desdemona]; importune her help to put you in your

[114] Shakespeare, *Richard II*, *The Norton Shakespeare*. *Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York, London: W W Norton, 1997) 952–1012. 4.1.178, 176.

place again" (282f), Iago suggest, and Cassio takes this as a sign of his "love" (276). Iago's words restore his belief in the discourse of power and he receives it gratefully from "honest Iago" (295).

5.2. Desdemona's Fall

Instead of a character fashioning a persona in a narrative flow, in the struggle between Desdemona and Othello, we see the static rigor of a signifying regime at work that has no term to acknowledge not only the desire but even the existence of a sexually active, fertile woman in marriage, loyal to her husband—or, for that matter, a term for a husband who succumbs to her charms. We witnessed the effect of this meaning-making order on Othello's words already in the trial scene. Since Othello has submitted to Iago's literalist regime, a discursive legitimation for desire is necessary in his marriage. Therefore, his physical contact with Desdemona must not betray desire but has to maintain the semblance of a purgative, cleansing, and punitive act. As far as it allows Othello to enjoy her body but remain in control while they are in contact, "Strangl[ing] her in her bed" (4.1.193f) is similar to a rape that protects the rapist from being "contaminated" by the power of female sexuality.

In spite of being "aware of national (or civic) differences," Pechter writes, Cassio finds a "shared humanity,"[115] and he is Desdemona's "natural ally."[116] This alliance has been forged in their common service of Othello's interest, who gradually withdraws his solidarity from both of them in the course of the plot. He eventually offers Desdemona up to "the cause" (5.2.1–3) in the final scene, while in his captivating tale in the first act he still remembered her saying, "I loved her" (1.3.170). To her profession of her "duty […] to the Moor my lord" (1.3.188), however, he responds by pledging allegiance to the "tyrant custom" (230) and by emphasizing his "natural and prompt alacrity […] in hardness" (233f) which, he implies, qualify him to serve Venice overseas. Once he has

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[115] Werner Sollors, "Ethnicity," *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, ed. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990) 288–305. Qtd. in Pechter 68.
[116] Pechter 61.

assured the senators of his allegiance, he requests "fit disposition" (237) for his wife, who, emerging from the Sagittary is, indeed, fatherless and homeless. Although she is now married, her only choice to avoid being abandoned in Venice is to go to the war. She sails to Cyprus with Iago, her custodian, as a fugitive, a woman who depends on the mercy of men to be accepted on a beleaguered island. By winning the Duke's permission, Desdemona has just avoided a near call of degradation and possible prostitution. We can hardly accept her as "a white ewe" (1.1.91) or one half of "the beast with two backs" (118) in Iago's appalling literal image, but the picture focusing on the lecherous huswife alone in her bed might as well represent her.

The first thing Desdemona does in Cyprus is listen to Iago's banter, which in itself makes Jan Kott see "something of an ordinary slut in her."[117] Next, she pleads persistently for a drunken man who was demoted for assaulting and wounding the governor in a brawl. If there is a stable signifying system, many critics use it to cut out a concept from "the floating realm of thought"[118] and put her in a category. However, concepts, again, like words, "are purely differential and defined not by their positive content but negatively by their relations with the other terms of the system" (117). As a result, Desdemona might fall in the category of a "whore" as Bianca often does. According to "a long and continuing line of interpreters," Pechter argues, Desdemona is "at least a bit of a whore after all."[119]

Desdemona herself, however, approaches other characters not according to discursive patterns but by adopting their point of view, as she does, for example, that of Othello and of Cassio. Due to her resistance to categories like that of the devilish[120] woman who cunningly undermines a man's position in the world or the angelic helper[121] and protector that uncritically submits herself

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[117] Jan Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (New York: W W Norton, 1974) 363.
[118] Saussure 112.
[119] Pechter 72.
[120] "[W]omen sprung from the Deuill," Swetnam asserts (15).
[121] "At the first beginning" Moses said, according to Swetnam, "a woman was made to be a helper vnto man" (1).

to his interest, her identity is hard to define. As Ernst Anselm Honigmann argues, "[j]ust about every character misunderstands her."[122] She asserts herself valiantly in her words in the trial scene, but this does not make her accepted in the discursive regime of the play in her own right. Even those women who act "courageously and intelligently" in terms of the Humanist ideal of "feminine excellence," Jordan claims, "prove the worth of their sex by denying it."[123] Accordingly, while she represents herself successfully in her rhetoric, she might be perceived as relinquishing her female identity as a result of the assumption that "Rhetoric in all its forms—public discussion, forensic argument, logical fence, and the like—lies absolutely outside the province of women."[124] This might affect Othello's perception of Desdemona. Once she "trumpet[s]" her "downright violence and storm of fortunes […] to the world" (1.3.251f), he denies her feminine desirability and presents himself as well as sexless, a man beyond "young affects," not anymore driven by "heat" or seeking "proper satisfaction" (265f).

This makes it possible to argue that while Othello refuses her as a woman, he embraces her as something else. When Brabantio buries who used to be his daughter in his perception, a "maiden never bold; […] so still and quiet that her motion / Blushed at herself" (1.3.96–98) but who is now "Dead […] to me" (61), Othello, to complement this, accepts her in "her faith" (296) the way he does Iago based on his "honesty and trust" (286). In fact, he pronounces the two almost in the same breath as he speaks to her old caregiver and turns to the new one: "My life upon her *faith* – *Honest* Iago, / My Desdemona must I leave to thee" (296, emphasis added). Explaining his perception of Desdemona's identity this way, Othello appears to be compelled to avoid seeing her as a sexually attractive woman from as early as the trial scene on, "lest," as he later says, "her body and beauty unprovide my mind again" (4.1.191). And, indeed, he greets her when they next meet in Cyprus as

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[122] Ernst Anselm Honigmann, "Introduction," Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. Ernst Anselm Honigmann, The Arden Shakespeare Ser. (Walton-on-Thames: Nelson, 1997) 1–111. 42.
[123] Jordan 252.
[124] Lionardo Bruni, *De studies et litteris*, transl. William Harrison Woodward, *Vittorino da Feltre and other humanist educators* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1897) 124, 126. Qtd. in Jordan 253.

"my fair warrior" (2.2.177), which would be difficult to understand in any other way than as, to a certain extent, the obverse of the change in Oberon's perception of Hippolyta.[125] Such a denial and promise in Othello on his wedding night will certainly require a constant effort of suppression, which over time magnifies to an absolute degree the sense of danger in falling. The result of this we witness in the outburst of his sensuousness in an excitement of his lower senses of smell and taste in 5.2 before he smothers Desdemona.[126] As Desdemona comments on seeing him "gnaw" his "nether lip" saying, "Some bloody passion shakes your very frame" (5.2.45f). Eldred Jones points out in this respect "Othello's enthusiasm for Desdemona's body which he had deliberately concealed from the senate."[127] The act of murder, in this light, appears sexually motivated, even though it is purported to be committed "all in honor" (5.2.303) as a punishment for cheating. "Strangl[ing] her in her bed, even the bed she hath contaminated" (4.1.193f) offers Othello a covert gratification in an act of alleged cleansing, which appears to him the only legitimate way of getting involved with the unwholesome impurity of the bodily act Iago's literalism has emphasized and demonized.

At the same time, Desdemona's rebellion against the constraints of the asexual identity imposed on her at the trial might serve as a justification for punishment. In fact, witnessing a play *directed* by a sexless but constantly anxious Iago,[128] some critics take the slightest hint at sexuality in her words as an occasion to call her a "slut" and a "whore"—"at least a bit." Desdemona herself is

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[125] "I wooed thee with my sword, / And won thy love doing thee injuries. / But I will wed thee in another key – / With pomp, with triumph, and with reveling." Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Norton Shakespeare*. *Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York, London: W W Norton, 1997) 814–861. 1.1.16–19. The reversed symmetry is not perfect, because Oberon's announcement does not promise love.

[126] Although Honigmann might be right in claiming that Othello's "exceptional sensuousness, though not necessarily 'racial', adds to our impression of his otherness" (21), in fact, I think that his subjection to Iago's discursive regime in itself sufficiently explains this outburst.

[127] Eldred Jones, "*Othello*—An Interpretation," *Critical Essays on Shakespeare's* Othello, ed. Anthony Gerard Barthelemy (New York: G. K. Hall; Toronto, New York: Maxwell Macmillan, 1994) 39–54. 46.

[128] Above, in section 3.4, I quoted Iago's words indicating an aversion to his wife's body (2.1.102–104). At the same time, the ancient is preoccupied with fantasies of illicit sexual acts. He speculates, for example, about the Moor having "done my office" "'twixt my sheets" (1.3.371, 370).

aware of the danger in being a woman in the "castle" (2.1.199) at a military outpost, and she is aware of the compulsion to fit her self within a negatively defined and narrowing niche of what it might mean to be "not […] a strumpet" (4.2.84), "not a whore" (89). "How have I been behaved," she reflects on being abused verbally and physically by Othello, "that he might stick / The small'st opinion on my least misuse?" (4.2.113f). She has to be careful to disguise her true self as a woman, but at times she is bold enough to indicate that her identity is in fact layered. "I am not merry," she apologizes once she dared to ask Iago to "praise me," "but I do beguile / The thing I am by seeming otherwise" (2.1.119, 124f). When Othello indulges in a grandiloquent rhetoric on the "absolute" "content" of his "soul" (2.1.186) upon merely seeing Desdemona in Cyprus, as if even a marital consummation could not afford "another comfort like to this" (187), Desdemona responds by subtly hinting at the fertility of her womb: "The heavens forbid," she gainsays, "But that our loves and comforts should *increase* / Even as our days do *grow*" (189, emphasis added).

In contrast to Othello's and Emilia's readiness to submit to Iago's omnispective eye, Desdemona is the only character who chooses her viewpoint throughout the action independently of being seen. She decides freely to adopt Othello's perspective in sympathy and is ready to reposition it even to oppose authority and represent that of Cassio, her confidant in her love for Othello, when Iago has insidiously ruined Cassio's career. Similarly to Adriana's efforts in *The Comedy of Errors* to restore a husband's love by undoing distinctions within the family that would reflect established realms in a hierarchically structured social organization,[129] Desdemona, too, promises Cassio that "My lord shall never rest. / I'll watch him tame and talk him out of patience; / His bed shall seem a school, his board a shrift; / I'll intermingle every thing he does / With Cassio's suit" (3.3.22–26). Desdemona acts as a connective tissue to restore the cohesion of friendship (7),

[129] Like "in private," so "in assemblies too," "reprehend[ing]" her husband for "some love that drew him oft from home […] was the copy of our conference," Adriana admits. "In bed he slept not for my urging it. / At board he fed not for my urging it. / Alone, it was the subject of my theme. / In company I often glanced it." Shakespeare, *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Norton Shakespeare*. *Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York, London: W W Norton, 1997) 690–730. 5.1.60f, 57, 56, 63–67.

servitude (9), love (10), and an intimate knowledge (11) that used to bind the three of them in a secret alliance against what cannot be more than "a politic distance" (13) temporarily disturbing it, "Something, sure, of state" (3.4.136). In comparison to their unity, wounding the governor (2.3.142f) appears to her "not almost a fault / T'incur a private check" (3.3.72f). To add weight to her supplication, she attempts to restore Othello's sense of identity in images of protecting his body.

In this, she follows inherent values rather than one outward, dominant point of view, and this is why she has to undergo a transformation in Othello's perception similar to that of the handkerchief: the depth in her self has to be regulated to the kind of reductive dichotomy she refused to accept in her approach to Othello's identity. She accepted Othello as a "visage in his mind" (1.3.254) instead of a surface appearance as "the marker of a theological category" with black as "the color of the devil, evil, sin"[130] in a "moral and religious"[131] sense. In contrast, Othello obsessively applies binaries to her in his effort to represent her in terms of the Iagovian literalism, using contrasting linguistic terms like "fair paper" and "most goodly book" on the one hand and "whore" on the other, as he does in "Was this fair paper, this most goodly book, / Made to write 'whore' upon?" (4.2.73f). In using such words, he cuts out a concept from "the floating realm of thought"[132] that he would contrast in his understanding with another concept that he can name, again, in an adequate opposite word.

Othello's persistent demand that Desdemona produce the handkerchief foregrounds its sheer presence or absence at the expense of its magical qualities. Desdemona counters this reduction by enacting the connective function of the fabric itself. To bridge the "unkind breach" between Cassio and "my lord" "for the love I bear to Cassio" (4.1.212, 211, 219), she points out the

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[130] Pechter 34. Elizabethans did have a concept of "distinct and biologically determined identities," Pechter elaborates on the Renaissance perception of skin color, but not a fully developed racist consciousness. They made a distinction between such types of identity rather in religiously defined terms.
[131] Julie Hankey, *Othello*, Plays in Performance Ser. (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1987) 11. Qtd. in Pechter 34.
[132] Saussure 112.

"dangers" Cassio shared with Othello and that his "good fortunes" now depend on Othello's "love" (3.4.91, 90). In the brothel scene, stark paradoxes like a "young and rose-lipped cherubin" looking "grim as hell" (4.2.65f) and "weed […] lovely fair" and smelling "sweet" (69f) structure and confound at once Othello's efforts to grasp her in an image. She withdraws from the effect of these by presenting herself as a mere "vessel" she preserves only for the "touch" of "my lord" (86f). While touching her body takes the form of striking in Othello's act in repulsion (4.1.231), Desdemona cannot act out her identity without conceptualizing it in the very life of her body as her gift to him. To "preserve" (4.2.86) her body for Othello, who cannot love it as long as it is alive but would "kill thee, / And love thee after" (18f), she has it shrouded in her "wedding sheets" (4.2.109) before he comes to her. In this, she anticipates his worship of "that whiter skin of hers than snow, / And smooth as monumental alabaster" (5.2.4f).

6. Conclusion

His efforts to extricate himself from the conundrum he himself has created makes Othello vulnerable to Iago's scheme. Othello has committed his triple original sin before the action of the play starts. One of his victims, Iago, however, offers Othello a plausible reinterpretation of this past history in a narrative that implicates the other two victims, Cassio and Desdemona, as perpetrators, so that it promises to blot out Othello's responsibility and erase his guilt. Othello's readiness to respond to Iago's story involves him in a process of reliving history on these new principles and thus overwriting a less attractive version of his lived experience:[133] He has exchanged the positive values of Desdemona's love and Cassio's loyalty for a relational one, that is, for the improvement of his own position in the state, but what he ends up with is a discursive point of view in a system of binary terms that cannot account for Desdemona's reality. If Othello's "vulnerability" is a result of

[133] Our understanding of the process of reinterpreting and rewriting lived experience and our sympathy for Othello, who practices it throughout to suppress his guilt accounts for the immediate effect of the play which, as Pechter puts it, "does not allow for the distance we normally associate with dramatic representation" (12).

"the uncertainty of the soldier's and stranger's position in the Venetian state,"[134] as Moisan explains, the successful elopement has not diminished this vulnerability in Othello. By marrying Desdemona, he has not crossed a line from being an alien to the safety of the inner circles of power. He is still an employee of the state to replace the incumbent governor of Cyprus, Montano, to obey the "voice" of the Duke's "opinion" (1.3.227, 225) and to be replaced, in turn, ironically, by Cassio. This, again, emphasizes the constancy of "the uncertain position of the warrior and the stranger in Venice"[135] and the illusory freedom of Iago's narrative improvisation[136] which turns out to be a discursive constraint for Othello.

Although Othello's hoped-for rise has not materialized, it still can take place in a fictional sense: if not in moving closer to those inside the imaginary circle of power, moving upward might still seem real if Othello can rise, in a moral sense, above Desdemona and Cassio, on whom so far he depended for the success of his effort to climb by elopement. Although upon his arrival in Cyprus and his reunion with Desdemona Othello expresses his emotional state in images[137] that sound even to Desdemona[138] "bombast" (1.1.14), to use Iago's word, Iago exposes Othello to an experience of the two opposing poles in his characteristic mode of signification. First he sets "down the pegs that make this music" (1.2.196) by reducing the other two victims of Othello's deeds that lead up to the action of the play, Cassio and Desdemona, to what Marjorie Garber argues is the hallmark of Cyprus, "the borderland" in *Othello*: the level of "wildness, passion, and rebellion."[139] Desdemona pleads persistently for a drunken man, Cassio, who has been demoted for hitting the governor of Cyprus in a brawl. This urges Othello to distance himself from, rather than being involved with, both of them to whom he is in fact indebted for their support in an undertaking that ended in his displacement

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[134] Moisan 196.
[135] Moisan 196.
[136] Greenblatt 228.
[137] "If it were now to die, / 'Twere now to be most happy; for, I fear, / My soul hath her content so absolute / That not another comfort like to this / Succeeds in unknown fate" (2.1.184–88).
[138] "The heavens forbid / But that our loves and comforts should increase, / Even as our days do grow!" (2.1.188–89).
[139] Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare After All* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004) 589.

away from the seat of power in Venice. Then, in the Temptation Scene, Iago offers him the "relief" of rising above them in a loathing (3.3.284f) that will soon congeal into a coherent fiction and then into a solid myth that will leave Othello no freedom in action. As Frank Kermode sums up the process, "Fictions can degenerate into myths whenever they are not consciously held to be fictive."[140] We observed a change parallel to this from a symbolic richness to a flat literal meaning taking place in the interpretation of the handkerchief. The Augustinian principle of "the superiority of reason to sense" seems to exert its power over Othello, who lets Iago's logos, his speech as the ultimate reason, "determine" what of his "sensible experience is really trustworthy."[141] Finally, in his offering of Desdemona to "the cause," Othello gratifies his senses on Desdemona's body in a way that pays homage, although grudgingly, to the higher judgment of reason.

I started my discussion of the play by questioning the traditional notion that Othello kills Desdemona for love. If he does ever love her, he does so, as he says, for "she did pity" the "dangers I had passed" (1.3.170, 169) in sympathy. Upon her "hint" that she would be wooed by a story like his, Othello says, "I spake" (168). And speaking in terms of the ongoing discourse that Iago dominates seems to overcome the power of Desdemona, who is reluctant to utter those terms: "I cannot say 'whore.' / It does abhor me now I speak the word" (4.2.168f). This discourse defeats what Boose calls the "profoundly mythic magic of sexual union," the "sacred" and, would add, highly personal "human act and its promise of generation."[142] In uttering the word but refusing to act it she resists Iago's literalism, the belief in the reality of the image words can conjure: "To do the act that might the addition earn / Not the world's mass of vanity could make me" (4.2.168–71), she asserts. Simply by resisting to yield herself up to the power of the term she defies Iago's analytical signifying regime.

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[140] Frank Kermode, *Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press, 2000) 39. ebrary Reader. 11 May 2014.
[141] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989) 133.
[142] Boose 67.

Conclusion

The chapters of this dissertation followed the evolution of a sense of identity in the main characters of four plays from the Tudor era and one early Stuart play that I selected on the basis of my interest in the manifestations of this sense in language, in perception, and in action. The examples show an optimistic start in a complete sense of identity that integrates self and persona harmoniously in one character, namely Hodge in *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, and helps him to a triumphant comic ending. In contrast, the last example, Shakespeare's *Othello,* exhibits a fragmentation of identity. The protagonist, Othello, represents emotional content and values that I associate with the unspeakable self, among others an attraction to occult practices and a sensitivity to personal attachment in love, while his antagonist, Iago, asserts himself successfully in discourse and understands the subtleties of intrigue and politics.

Between *Gammer Gurton's Needle* and *Othello*, there is an almost continuous line of progress from totality toward fragmentation. The second example, *The Comedy of Errors* by Shakespeare, begins this move with a strong sense of division along the same lines as I observed in *Othello*, between Antipholus of Syracuse and his Ephesian brother. This separation of the inner man from his ambitious social counterpart makes itself felt in *Arden of Faversham*, as well. Arden and Black Will complement each other almost as clearly as Arden and Mosby do. The more clearly each function dominates one of two or three separate characters, the more they seem to be depending on each other. Therefore, an understanding of motivation in them is not possible if we consider any of them in isolation. A division, it seems, goes along with a sense of inseparability.

The third play in the series presents the reader with the most obscure structure of identity and oppresses with the keenest sense of alienation. Doctor Faustus is not a character we would easily identify either with an inclination to retreat into a private space or with skills to successfully wield the power of words in social interaction. He escapes from a unity with his self with the help of

the rhetorical device of self-address, but his quest for knowledge and personal fulfillment in an outward control of material resources are thwarted by the narrow limits of the signifying function of language. Therefore, Faustus strives for a personal involvement in his transcendental career with no success. Besides his discomfort with the discursive fixation of identity, his perception of himself and his world teeters on the verge of the unreal.

Besides a tendency to the analytical representation of the components of identity, the differences in its manifestations also exhibit a gradual loss of the freedom of action and a strengthening of the power of discourse in shaping a character's sense of who he or she is. Othello's dependence on Iago's narrative is the most pertinent example for this, while Hodge still enjoyed a considerable freedom in his choice of action. Characters are not free in their sense perception either, which is also strongly influenced by expectations created in discourse and by the language that endows sensory data with intelligible meaning. Here, again, Othello is the character most obviously misguided in his perception and the most helpless in his attempts to resist the power of language. Hodge, in contrast, frees himself elegantly from his delusions by his own rhetorical efforts.

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